

FROM A LITTLE
TOWN-GARDEN
AND OTHER SKETCHES

BY
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FROM A LITTLE
TOWN-GARDEN

TO
MY SISTERS
SARAH AND HESTER

THE following essays, for the most part, were contributed originally to the Woman's Supplement of the *Guardian*: they are reprinted here by kind permission. The restrictions of a newspaper being somewhat severe, the essays have been in every case revised, and in some cases expanded. Numbers 5 and 6 appeared in *Mothers in Council*, a periodical of the Mothers' Union. To the Editors of those journals my grateful thanks are due.

August 1910.

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FROM A LITTLE TOWN-
GARDEN

FROM A LITTLE TOWN- GARDEN

THOSE who own large and beautiful gardens, with all things needful for them that money can buy, can perhaps scarcely realise the full joys of a little roadside town-garden, poor of soil, overshadowed by one's neighbour's trees, and bounded by the humble privet hedge abhorred of Mr. Robinson,¹ where every flower, every leaf almost, is one's dear familiar friend, and each success means a triumph over difficulty. My garden slopes down to the road on the outskirts of a country town in the Thames valley, within half-an-hour of London, and within easy reach, alas! of factory smoke and river fog.

¹ "The meanest of all mean shrubs . . . growing pretty well where nothing else will grow, but not worth having anywhere" (W. Robinson, "The English Flower-garden").

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The little old-fashioned Crescent formed of mine and a dozen other Early Victorian villas has seen better days, and once had a distinct individuality and an interesting society, chiefly feminine, of its own. Here lived a famous woman-writer and novelist, and in close friendship with her a lady whose life was bound up with the most stirring events of European history, for her daughter, a celebrated beauty, was married to a distinguished French marshal, who commanded the cavalry in the Crimea and fought in the Algerian wars, and under Napoleon III. in 1870. Yet another resident in the Crescent was a great Scottish lady much given to a somewhat severe form of philanthropy.

The Crescent's best days are past, yet still it keeps up an air of exclusiveness; even the horns of the motors, and the dreadful new shrieks they have lately invented, seldom trouble its peace. A few years ago, a family of rooks suddenly took possession of the tall old elms in the large garden called in local parlance the Plantation, the common property of the Crescent houses, which faces

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the row on the opposite side of the road. The rooks have built there ever since. Starlings, thrushes, and blackbirds have become rarer of late years in the Plantation, and my garden is left mostly to the wicked, thieving little sparrows, who quarrel and fight in the may trees. Their breasts are here a paler grey; the pretty white bar on their chestnut wings is a shade more distinct than with their sooty brethren in London. The muffin-man still rings his bell, and bears aloft his shrouded wares through the dim winter afternoons; and I have an affection for him, and scant sympathy with those irritable and neurotic individuals who are always trying to cut him off from the earth. In spring we have the fern and primrose sellers, and there is a poor protégé of mine with a real gift for flower-arrangement who brings me great bouquets of lavender and quaking-grass and meadow-sweet.

Many plants and flowers will grow most beautifully in my back-garden, where few ever come to see them. Over the hen-runs hang long tendrils of hop and wild vine,

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which bear abundantly in the mild climate of this sheltered district; on the wall the ampelopsis has just put on its new green summer dress, and beside it the lilac-shaped flowers of the large ceanothus bloom all the summer long. It hangs there like a great curtain of soft mysterious blue; but the small, close-growing varieties of this creeper are less untidy and easier to keep in order. In a corner of this garden, where a spreading jessamine has had its own way for twenty years, I sowed some tricolour convolvulus—pink, white, and blue—a present from the little grey-walled garden of one of the Military Knights of Windsor; but it has all come up as white as a snow-shower. Here, too, is William Allan Richardson in great beauty—a precious thing in spite of all its caprice. Years ago I gave it pride of place in the front garden; the flowers came in generous response, but their flaming hearts turned white. Now it decorates a little low doorway in an obscure corner, where it seldom gets any attention.

How many dreary regions of suburban

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England, what unspeakable meanness of the railway approaches to London, in their desolation of yellow brick, might be covered with beauty at a few shillings cost! Here the crimson rambler stains all the pergola red; with its wonderful luxuriance it is a most lovable thing, but the flower itself is poor. The beautiful scarlet single rose called the Lion, or the Lady Waterlow, or the pink cluster Leuchtstern should be oftener seen in its place. Up the pillars of the front door climbs a deep rose-coloured clematis, and intertwined with it one of the old-fashioned, small-flowered kinds, violet-blue; here, too, is the glorious sky-blue Beauty of Worcester, and behind it, on the sunny wall, a wistaria is showing its early blossoms. The tendrils encircle a curious weather-guide (*Wetteranzeiger*) which I first saw in a rough shed that served as studio to an old peasant-artist in a Bavarian village. It is made out of a semi-circular metal disc, on which a smiling sun is painted against a blue sky, and beneath the sun are clouds dropping rain-tears. The indicator is a hazel twig deftly inserted in a little

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sheath, which points to various weather-signs inscribed round the edge in South-German *patois*: *Sakrisch Schö*, *Ungwiss*, *Grob Weda*, for Very Fair, Change, Stormy. The old man invented those Anzeiger fifty years ago, and he had done nothing else but paint them ever since, sending them, he told me with pride, all over the world. He must be long past work now, or more probably he has departed, leaving behind him a thousand yellow suns on a blue tin sky as his whole life's work. We may think it not much perhaps, but still it was his own; none had ever painted his Wetteranzeiger before him; they are his own original contribution to the world's achievement, which makes them something worth. The same hazel twig on mine has done duty through sunshine and storm for a score of years, and is unwearied still. Save for a day now and again, and a fortnight's *Sakrisch Schö* at Easter, it pointed, I remember, with sorrowful fidelity to *Grob Weda* all through last year's dripping summer.

Children swarm in the Crescent. Lately,

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on bright mornings, a poor woman has come down the road with a perambulator, containing two infants almost buried under its hot, glistening leather hood and woollen rug. A small child patters along with a heavy baby in her arms. She seems to have a new baby to carry every year, and it has bare feet in winter and tight, shiny boots in summer. The last baby but one has just learnt to walk, and a few days ago it came toddling proudly after the rest of the family past my gate. Six times it tried, by way of a little variety, to step off the pavement into the road ; and every time it gave up the desperate attempt in fear. . . . At last it succeeded ; first one leg, then the other, was carefully planted in the gutter—supreme achievement of its one year of life.

At a little distance a barrel-organ strikes up, accompanied from afar by fearful howls from my Irish terrier Pat. All music to Pat is soul-destroying and productive of instant flight, except a military band. He enjoys that ; and he listens with approval to the soldiers playing as they march on

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Sundays from the neighbouring barracks to church. With his wonderful intelligence Pat is all but human, and it is hard to think that his small shining light is to be quenched for ever after his short life is ended here below. I would fain believe that some happy future awaits him beyond, where he will never have to suffer disappointment, never see boxes packed (a sight that always fills him with despair), and never more be left behind on the wrong side of the gate. Like the rest of his kind, Pat is a wonderful jumper: in his touching joy at being taken out for a walk, only the same daily walk up the same familiar street, he leaps high in air round and round before the door, his "*snub* of a tail," as a little child described it, whirling after him till it is actually lost to sight, and he is like the dancing figures in the old-fashioned revolving toy—called, I think, "The Wheel of Life"—of our childhood. He spends a large part of his leisure time keeping scornful vigil over forty-five industrious hens who lay three thousand eggs per annum in the back-yard.

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Pat and the children, as they often do, have enticed me out of the garden, and it is time to return to it. In the border, close to the little pathway leading from the pavement, I have made a sudden excursion into forestry, and planted several oaks grown from acorns picked up in Windsor Park. There are nearly three hundred species of oak known in the northern regions of the world. These have a deeply serrated, very dark-green leaf, and they bear long-shaped acorns with rough, hairy cups. Before many years their royal heads will tower above everything else in the garden; at present they are still sheltered by a pretty heath that I brought from its home in Dorsetshire. Near the oak trees, which must be transplanted some day, I have contrived a tiny rockery, and planted it with some rare sedums and small mesembryanthemums from Scilly; I think it a great kindness on their part to exchange their glorious home for mine. I take pride also in two fine hydrangeas that stand in tubs beside the pathway, though they are but faint colour-echoes of the

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wonderful Cornish flowers whose strange unearthly blue seems to shine in phosphorescent light. These once seen in their splendour can never be forgotten.

My garden list is complete with a few homely things that do not need description; but amid mignonette and pansies, and the roses even, I must give special praise to the geraniums, if only because it has become the fashion to despise them. Nowadays it is no unusual thing for people to boast that they have not one geranium in their garden. "In the front gardens of very small villas," says a scornful writer in the *Times*, "geraniums are still associated with gentility, and grown for that reason, not because they are beautiful. They are as insipid"—preposterous comparison! geraniums with their sweet scent and deep and tender colours—"as Græco-Roman sculpture;" and the writer goes on to draw an elaborate analogy between the romantic and the classical ideals of beauty. The cause of this unkind feeling towards geraniums is not, I think, so far to seek: it simply lies in their amicable nature

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that puts up with anything ; a quality which for some reason we hold cheap in human beings, but should surely be grateful for in a flower. Thus we have often seen beautiful geraniums blooming in poor, close little rooms in towns, turning themselves towards the light, such as it is, that finds its way through dusty window-panes.

Gardening is a delight for all ages, from the time when we sowed our names in mustard and cress and watched the magic tracing of the letters, till we grow old and life holds fewer and fewer joys in store, and we think sometimes, like the little cross child, that "there is nothing left to look forward to." Yet there is always something to look forward to in a garden : we can always find both hope and promise there, and no matter how many other pleasures fail, seed-time and flower-time remain.

MRS. OLIPHANT

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NEARLY thirteen years have gone by since Margaret Wilson Oliphant was laid to rest beside her two boys in the little cemetery at Eton. It is good to gather up again some memories of her vivid and charming personality, of her brave, indomitable spirit that in all her troubles never once failed her, and of the willing sacrifice of her whole life for the sake of those whom she loved.

Her autobiography, "that poor little broken story" as she calls it, is a record of almost ceaseless suffering and anxiety, and of daily struggles to provide for a succession of unfortunate relations who came to be dependent on her. By some strange fatality, they all broke down in life, her own two boys as well, and brought her no recompense but sorrow.

For them she laboured, till at last the pen

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wore a hole in her finger ; for them she sacrificed her best powers, doing work that she well knew to be unworthy of her, because it was the kind of thing that would bring in money quickly. Nevertheless the little house that was her home for twenty years in the Crescent at Windsor was always cheerful and bright. She loved to have beautiful things about her, to go on, in her quaintly incorrect phrase, "with a flowing sail," and she had the excellent gift, in the midst of all her labours, of appearing to have nothing to do. Yet often she worked all night : the neighbours in the opposite houses would see her light still burning at daybreak.

It is difficult, even now, fairly to estimate a genius which was thus fettered and tied down to the level of mere hack-work that it might supply the common needs of daily life. To her, its most useful characteristic must have been the amazing agility with which it could rise to every emergency, and help her over every crisis ; could amuse itself now with the smallest interests and follies of our ordinary lives, and again, pene-

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trate far into the mists of the Unseen ; for the instinct of the supernatural was strong in her, and in the wonderful allegory of "The Beleaguered City" it reached its highest and most daring expression.

Her first successful effort in fiction was the series of "Chronicles of Carlingford," which "almost, never quite," she says, made her "one of the popularities of literature." They were written in the early days of her widowhood in Edinburgh ; and the record of their acceptance by the two chiefs of the Blackwoods speaks yet to one's heart from the fascinating pages of the autobiography.

She went to them with the suggestion that they should take a novel from her in serial form, although they had already rejected several articles she had offered them. "They shook their heads of course, and thought it would not be possible to take such a story—both very kind, and truly sorry for me, I have no doubt. I think I see their figures now against the light . . . and myself, all blackness and whiteness in my widow's dress, taking leave of them as if it

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didn't matter, and oh ! so much afraid that they would see the tears in my eyes. I went home to my little ones, running to the door to me 'with flichterin' noise and glee.' ” She sat up, she says, nearly all that night “in a passion of composition, stirred to the very bottom of my mind.” The story, first of the Carlingford series, was successful, and her fortune seemed assured.

“The Chronicles of Carlingford” deserve to be remembered, together with much admirable work in history and biography, such as the Lives of Edward Irving and Thomas Chalmers and her studies of the reigns of Anne and George II. ; but for the most part her novels, alas ! are trivial and uninteresting. The figures on the crowded canvas fade before our eyes ; they have hardly a flicker of life in them left. They had, indeed, very little interest for her who made them ; they were curiously apart from herself ; she forgot them entirely, and went over the same ground with them over and over again. She was well aware of her deficiencies in this respect, and she took very little pride

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in any of her work. "What a terrible question you ask me about the sequence of my books!" she wrote to Mr. Blackwood. "I don't remember much one year what I wrote the year before, which is a special dispensation of Providence, I think, on my behalf, for how could I write another word if my conscience was oppressed with all the rubbish I have poured upon the world?"

On the other hand, her best work in fiction is very delicately handled, and full of minute and shrewd observation: a faculty which made her more than a little reckless at times, and led her on to unsafe ground. One night, soon after the publication of her story called "Within the Precincts," the Crescent at Windsor was in a flutter of fear, for it was rumoured that the Military Knights, white-haired warriors of a bygone generation, intended to make a raid on No. 9 and break the enemy's windows. The neighbours trembled behind their tightly-barred shutters, fearing the Knights might mistake the house in their indignation. But the little storm blew over, and peace was again restored.

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The autobiography contains various pictures of Mrs. Oliphant's friends, which to-day have lost none of their vividness. Chief among these was perhaps Principal Tulloch, the greatest Scottish churchman of his time, who almost died of a false quantity. He made it in a speech at some great presbytery meeting; and he told the story to Mrs. Oliphant, she says, "with impassioned seriousness." She laughs at the desperate remedy she suggested then, herself in deadly earnest, that he should call together the same august body of his hearers as on that unhappy occasion, and make confession before them all.

There is a description of the Carlyles that is most beautifully touched, and a little sidelight on Mrs. Carlyle that is worth recalling. "Cecco" Oliphant, the youngest child, when an infant was lying ill on his mother's lap, and Mrs. Carlyle sat by telling Mrs. Oliphant of some remedy she advised for him, with pathetic wisdom, "as if she had known all about babies." That evening she wrote to her friend, "at Mr. Carlyle's wish," to say

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that he had known of just such a case in a baby, and its complete recovery.

During many wanderings abroad Mrs. Oliphant met Montalembert, whose *Life* she subsequently wrote in Paris. His somewhat terrifying fascination had at one time a considerable influence on her. As a rule she was not at her best in society, so called, and despite her charm and her rare gift of light-heartedness, young people found her a little alarming. With the ordinary "bit of a young person" she was often impatient, especially when he—or rather, in most instances, she—ventured to compliment her on her "industry." To this word, when applied to herself "by those who had neither industry or anything else to boast of," Mrs. Oliphant had a somewhat unreasonable objection. She was thinking, perhaps, of some such intrusion when she wrote one day, "There are moments when to be out of the way is the highest proof of genius."

Mrs. Oliphant's rare appearances in the literary world took place mostly in the days of Mrs. Duncan Stewart, the old fairy of the

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little *salon* in Sloane Street, who refused an offer of marriage after she was seventy, and never lacked an ancient lover to the end. To such loves, Mrs. Oliphant says, age gives a piquancy as to the loves of children. Two other friends she had, of widely differing type, who were her neighbours at home in Windsor. One of these, the mother of the beautiful Maréchale de Canrobert, was a type of great lady that has almost vanished now; she lived on after her day was past in some bitterness of spirit because she was forgotten by the world; the other was "a little happy woman of the angel kind," who went by the name of Nell, and shed modest piety around her. To most people Nell seemed a very lowly saint indeed, rather ineffective perhaps, a small flickering light; but Mrs. Oliphant loved her with a wonderful devotion, and wove her memory into the beautiful allegory of "A Little Pilgrim in the Unseen."

The years which Mrs. Oliphant spent at Windsor, though darkened by sorrow, had many "blinks of happiness," as she calls them, shining through; and such bright memories

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as she had were never lost : she could rejoice in them with a buoyancy of spirit which is granted to few. “I wonder if what has been ever dies,” she would say ; “*tout peut se réparer.*” Yet moments of despondency would sometimes come, when she asked herself whether the labours of her difficult life had not been all in vain. In one of the last stories she wrote there is a wonderfully skilful description of a once successful artist who has outlived his fame ; and she added a preface to this story which contains a reflection of her own life, then ebbing, as she said, with the tide. She fancied in her old age that her work was “behind the fashion,” a thing already forgotten ; and she felt bitter against the world that gives credit, she thought, only to success. And yet, in her inconsequent way, she really cared little if, after all, her work had failed. “What does it matter ?” she would say ; “nothing at all now—never anything to speak of. . . . Now that there are no children ”—for they all died before her—“to whom to leave any memory, and the friends

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drop day by day, what is the reputation of a circulating library to me? . . . God help us all! what is the good done by any such work as mine, or even better than mine?

. . . Yet who knows? The little faculty may grow a bigger one in the more genial land to come, where one will have no need to think of the boiling of the daily pot. In the meantime it was good to have kept the pot boiling and maintained the cheerful household fire so long, though it is smouldering out in darkness now."

Mrs. Oliphant was gifted with exceptional health, which for years stood the test of all her trials. "I am as strong as iron, as though I could live for ever," she wrote when there was nothing left her to live for; and she longed at times for the rest which physical weakness might have brought. When the last of her children had been taken from her, and her loneliness deepened, she prayed that the end for her too might soon come; and for once, at least, her desire was fulfilled.

As I saw her in the last year of her life, she was a pretty old lady with the dignity of

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a queen, and shining eyes which seemed as though they saw far into the distance. She was looking towards "the more genial land," waiting for the time when she would be with those again whom she had lost here, and in that steadfast hope she died.

She had drawn very close to God. "The one good thing I am conscious of," she wrote to her friend "A. K. H. B.," "is the great, calm, all-sustaining sense of a Divine Unseen, a Silent Companion, God walking in the cool of the garden. . . ."

SOME PLAIN THOUGHTS
ON CLOTHES

SOME PLAIN THOUGHTS ON CLOTHES

“CLOTHES are the comedy of the rich and the tragedy of the poor.” I read this saying in a novel recently, and it seemed to me to strike the right note of sympathy with those who have to keep up appearances on small means, and whom the writer with true insight calls “the poor.” For at the extreme ends of the social ladder the question of clothes is simple. At one end all the fine things of the world can be had for money; at the other end there is a certain peace which must inevitably result from the absence of all need of them. Between these two extremes lies the real difficulty; and neither sex is exempt from it. Not being however sufficiently expert in male attire, I will confine these considerations to the feminine wardrobe.

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I saw lately in one of the ladies' papers an article headed "Why be Slaves to Fashion?" in which the writer gave instances of queens and great ladies who affect to despise it, and wear some of their clothes made after a pattern that the majority have long ago discarded. Well, and so they may; if they are sufficiently distinguished, people have the prerogative, that has always seemed to me unfair, over their poorer neighbours, that they may go about in almost any clothes they like without being thought peculiar. But those whom I have in mind cannot afford to be too far out of the fashion, or else they make themselves "conspicuous," a course which for the needy is always unwise.

True economy consists in choosing clothes so quietly suitable that they simply pass unnoticed. This precept on paper looks deadly dull; but in reality it need not be so. Since we cannot give much money for dress, we are forced to give time instead, and here a small advantage steps in, for time means thought, and thought often engenders some little originality, quite compatible with our

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modest ideal, which is entirely lacking in the smart clothes of some women who have no ideas of their own to put into them.

Still, under all circumstances, dress for young people, and the fortunate few who "look nice in anything" is comparatively simple.

It is mostly the older ones for whom we feel, because the question of clothes undoubtedly grows more difficult with advancing years, until the picturesqueness of quite old age lends its own charm; and perhaps by that time nothing matters very much. Yet a beautifully dressed old lady is a charming sight, and far too rare. I remember a pretty old aunt of mine, long ago; she always wore a little short jacket, ("coatee" she called it), that belonged, I think, to no fashion that ever was invented, worked all over with jet beads. Children, as a rule, rarely notice dress in their elders, but we used to love her in the coatee. I can see those little jet things now, shining with a thousand broken lights down the long track of years. . . . I can recall her caps too, tied under

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the chin with thin white gauze ribbon ; she was very particular about this ribbon, which was made for her specially in Paris. Caps, now so seldom seen, were capable of endless variety. How pretty they could be ! and brought down rather low behind, how useful in hiding the straggling short hair about the neck that very few of us as we grow older contrive to manipulate with grace. Our nurse's caps were bordered with little tabs of violet and black velvet set in soft frills of white net, that framed her old face most becomingly. She was never seen without her cap unless we were preparing for a journey or at other times of quite unusual agitation : nursery life being more humdrum then by far than it is now. In these days maidservants frequently stipulate that they wear no caps at all—or they invent the merest apology for a cap, a small crumpled object that is anything but pretty. Caps have departed with the smocks and sun-bonnets of the old country-people, and I think some grace and simplicity have gone with them.

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These nursery memories bring certain childish figures again before us all; and we find that youthful fashions have undergone a complete transformation in the last twenty-five years, for which we may indeed be thankful. In an old faded photograph before me as I write is a little girl of those days, three years old, dressed in a tight black serge bodice, for she was in mourning, which in family life, even for children, was taken far more seriously than it is now. The bodice in the photograph is perfectly plain, buttoned to the throat and all the way down, edged with black braid such as we still see on gentlemen's frock coats. In another picture the child appears in a white canvas bridesmaid's frock, trimmed with "yak" lace, a very heavy woolly decoration that caught in everything. I am glad to think that the yaks are now left free to roam on their Thibetan mountains, for I have heard of nobody wearing yak lace for many years past. It must be confessed that with few exceptions children's dress of that bygone generation had the merit of cheapness. For party

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frocks “nun’s veiling” was the highest achievement of fashion in many a nursery ; an economical though supremely uninteresting material.

These recollections have led me away from my special subject ; and we must return to consider those who have reached “il mezzo del cammin” under present conditions and in the shadow, if it *be* a shadow, of enforced economy. There are countless small ways of making the best of ourselves ; I only suggest here one or two.

In the first place, let us have a few good clothes rather than many inferior. “I am too poor to buy cheap things” said a woman of experience ; and accordingly she economised in quantity rather than in quality. The gain was great in more ways than one, for the eye soon tires of perpetual change, and to see some women come down in a different dress every day, and many times a day, is positively wearisome. What does it matter if we do appear frequently, or go twice on a visit to the same house even, in the same clothes ? We can usually contrive some little alteration that

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will bring them up to date, and people are very unlikely to notice them: they forget, far oftener than we think. Still, if we do feel anxious on that point, we shall be wise in choosing quiet things that will not easily be remembered. Evening dresses, though usually of course more expensive, are less of a problem on the whole than our day-clothes, as we never need so many of them, and for some reason I have never seen explained, they remain much longer in fashion.

Coming to some points of detail, there are various common mistakes to bear in mind: that, for instance, of wearing blouses that do not "go" with our skirts; the figure is cut in two, and presents a hopelessly in-artistic appearance. We should try for some degree of harmony in our dress, and no matter then how simple it be; thus the upper half should never be elaborately trimmed and the lower left severely plain; the one should match the other in colour if not in material, or at least recall the colour in a little touch somewhere that will make the whole complete. Also, unless we have

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a maid, or are very careful and clever, our shirts and blouses should fasten in front. This is a pity in some ways, for it is then not quite so easy to make the fronts pretty. But it so often happens when we are in a hurry, that we are unequal to the gymnastic feat of fastening the hooks and eyes behind ; or they get flattened and twisted in the wash, an occurrence which produces a peculiar feeling of despair, and we afterwards experience the humiliation in some public place of a stranger kindly offering to "do us up" at the back. Again, it is possible for us all to escape such extremes as the dismal "sheath" dresses, the very long jackets worn over short skirts, the monster hats, and the hideous motor-caps. In church, it is hard to say which of these two forms of head-gear looks the more irreverent. "*La mode est toujours jolie*" is a fallacy that misleads many ; we can set a limit to its follies and yet remain "in the fashion."

There are moments when these considerations may perhaps be found useful. Yet I do not mean to advocate thereby a too

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critical attitude towards one another's clothes, for that tends to stir up strife at home ; and we should never be hard upon failure, especially where it results, as it often does, alas ! in many other matters beside clothes, from painstaking thought and care. "It is so much more natural to break down," as a certain old lady used to say, when her little grandchildren tried to repeat their poetry to her, but forgot it in the middle ; and she was right, for in all failure there is something that appeals to our sympathies. And when all is said and done, this difficult question of clothes matters less than we sometimes fear. Across "the tragedy of the poor" there still shines some such thought as guided the ladies of Cranford :—"as they observe, 'What does it signify how we dress here at Cranford, where everybody knows us?' and if they go from home, their reason is equally cogent, 'What does it signify how we dress here, where nobody knows us?'"

THE CHILDREN OF THE
POOR

THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR

IN the darkest alleys of our great cities there bloom like flowers in desert places, the children of the poor. After a few years the struggle of life begins to tell on them; but in infancy, it is wonderful how strong and healthy they often are—rosy and round-limbed: more contented by nature, too, than many a child in brighter homes. I saw a family who had been for weeks on the verge of starvation, in their home on Christmas Day. As I entered, the tiny kitchen seemed quite full of children. It was towards evening, and the uncertain light just touched the golden heads of three of them, as they lay asleep, tired out with the day's little excitements, on a rickety old sofa, each clasping a new doll. "The dolls were only twopence each," the mother said; "my

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sister gave me two, and I got a little sewing to do for a lady last week and bought the other one. I dressed them in some bits of rag. My boy Willie, he made the decorations four years ago; they have come out quite fresh again, you see," and she pointed with pride to the mantelpiece and the doorway which were hung with "ladders" and chains of coloured paper, bits of brightness here and there.

The gift of enjoyment is seen in its highest form among the children of the poorest, for with them it thrives upon nothing at all. A Tate cube sugar-box on wheels, such as can be seen trundling down any back street with several babies inside it, is a glorious plaything with limitless possibilities; and a tin soldier with one broken leg needs only to have the other broken for him, then he can stand as well as ever. Many of their out-of-door games that seem highly mysterious to a looker-on, are simply scenes of home life represented with various fictitious improvements. I saw two little girls playing by the roadside: one was

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standing by, while the other had marked out a small enclosed space on the ground, and was carefully lifting some pebbles into it, laying them down side by side. I found that this game, with fine irony, was called "Teaching Mother to Work," and was apparently a glorified representation of the children's bed-time.

The little gutter children's cheerful outlook is rarely darkened by fear; they are afraid of nothing, except perhaps solitude; for almost all children dread being left alone. But to those born and bred in great cities solitude is practically unknown; they live their lives in a crowd. The great facts of death and life are brought home at first, of course, by many a sharp lesson; we bring our children to them gradually, step by step, but the poor have no time for that. A very small boy was taken to see his dead mother. "He did scream, he was that frightened," the sister said to me, "but father, he made him look again; he said he would remember her better." Doubtless the dark side often overshadows the bright in

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the kaleidoscopic vision of the gutter child ; but turning to the bright side, we find that his fearlessness tends to enjoyment and understanding of many things that would frighten a rich child leading a sheltered nursery life. I was at a large parish entertainment one day, during a performance of *Aladdin*. In the front row among the audience sat a poor woman with a two-year-old baby that was enjoying itself thoroughly. In due course appeared the Slave of the Ring, an awful object that flapped its arms and howled, and leapt about the stage. A little girl in a smart frock clung to her mother in terror. The baby scrambled off its parent's lap, and crawling along to the edge of the platform it looked up into the slave's horrid face and clapped its hands approvingly. A few rows back another poor child was fast asleep in its mother's arms despite the roars of applause that greeted Mrs. Jarley's waxworks and a flaming gas-jet blazing down full on its face. When "Mother Seigel" was wound up for her performance, represented by a man

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dressed as a toothless hag with a frightful grinning mask, holding a large doll and a bottle containing some black fluid, the little child beneath the gas-jet woke up and gazed at the figure. In its eyes there shone a light of reminiscence ; it stretched out its hands pleasantly. “ *Granny !* ” it cried. A roar of laughter drowned the little voice ; its owner settled down again, offended ; and was soon asleep as before.

A deeper reason than the mere familiarity with life sometimes underlies the fearless content of little children, which it would lead us too far into mystery to follow here to its full extent ; I mean the consciousness, which with some is wonderfully clear, of the Divine companionship. It was of a poor child that I once heard a little story which illustrates this truth. In the cemetery of an orphanage one day, a Sister of Mercy was telling me about some of the children buried there. She stopped by one of the graves and said, “ This was a child of six, who when she was dying seemed troubled about something and I asked her what it

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was. 'Shall I wear a pink frock in heaven, do you think?' she said. I answered, that we cannot tell what God will do; but we believe all His children will be in white, in robes of innocence. She thought again, more hopefully, but still not satisfied. Suddenly a thought struck her. 'It will be all right,' she said; 'God knows I don't like pink.' And she died quite content."

In the same way as these souls of little children pass unharmed and undismayed through many dangers, so their bodies get hardened to resist all kinds of adverse conditions. Of late years, with our advanced theories on hygiene and home management, it is possible that too much has been said and written about the improvidence and helplessness of the mothers; for the cheering truth remains that many a home in which life is a daily struggle for bread, is a pattern of good order. Yet it needs a lifetime of patience before a working woman will consent to carry out the simplest suggestion. A doctor told me he had tried in vain to persuade his poorer patients to put a cover

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on the milk jug which stands outside every cottage door ready for the milkman. The lidless jug first collects smuts and dust on the bottom, then the milk is poured in, and left to gather more smuts on the top; so that by the time it reaches the children, it is sandwiched between two layers of microbes. The "comforters" too, condemned by every doctor in the land, will probably long continue to flourish, dragged by a string along the floor, conveying a legion of germs to the baby. These and countless other questions come before those who try to teach common-sense rules of health to the poor; among them all the clothing of their children is, I think, too rarely considered. The mothers usually err on the side of overloading them with clothes, for since thick, heavy stuffs are the most durable, they have to do duty all the year round; and it is difficult to see a way out of this. Look at any poor baby sitting tired and drowsy at a mothers' meeting on some midsummer day, or dragged through the long, doubtful joys of an August Bank Holiday: it will probably be dressed in its

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winter clothes, with woolly, furry additions of the most oppressive description. These are probably the mother's idea of making it look its best; but there are few things more exhausting for a child. "The poor children grow up, or they don't grow up; that's what it comes to." Those in our great towns who do grow up must be hardy and strong to a degree almost unknown to the well-to-do and carefully nurtured: so the balance rights itself, and their useful gift of contentment makes for health of body and mind. A store of happiness is theirs too, from which the rich child can rarely draw, in the crowded peepshow of the streets. From morning to night their days are crammed with interest, and their minds are fed. It was Bishop Creighton who said that far more can be learnt in the gutter than in the schoolroom.

They are often very wicked, these little ones of the poor; they have "cheek" and "darin'," two words which stand with them for every kind of wrong-doing, to an incredible degree; but they are never uninteresting,

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and they very rarely complain. They have a certain serenity which takes each day as it comes, unquestioning and unafraid ; it springs from their daily contact with the unveiled realities of life, which, whether for good or evil, is the heritage of the slum-child.



COUNTRY LIFE FOR LITTLE
CHILDREN

COUNTRY LIFE FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

“LONDON is a place *to stay at home* in.” This golden rule was once given to me by a wise mother of a family, but very few know how to keep it. Peace, quiet, and leisure, things essential to the training and care of children, seem nowadays to go ever further out of our reach. It is partly, I think, owing to this lack in home life that so many children grow up estranged from their parents; they cannot get on with them and are “undemonstrative,” a word with which the forgiving mother often consoles herself for their being snubby and rude. Doubtless a remedy for this state of things can be found, no matter where our lot is cast, if we look for it before it is too late; but since home life in London, from one cause or another, has become increasingly difficult to maintain

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in peace and happiness, I think it is worth almost any sacrifice to ourselves, where circumstances of education, etc., make it at all possible, to bring up our little children in the country. For even at its best, London life robs them of many joys and blessings. Their souls are cramped in its narrow spaces and they grow up ignorant of the most beautiful works of God. They are frightened too, perhaps oftener than we know, by the sights and sounds of evil that we cannot keep from them in a crowded city. This is not so, as a rule, with the little ones of the poor; for they are hardened to many things that our children shrink from; and, fortunately perhaps, the faculty of observation is very imperfectly developed by town life, so that they pass unnoticed a thousand things with which they come in contact every day. Very often they simply don't see them. An interesting comparison of the eyesight of London children with that of country children is given in a book written recently by two specialists on "Sight and Hearing in Childhood."

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The writer of the first section states that he examined the eyes of a number of children in some elementary schools in London, and applied the same tests in a country school at Cheshunt. Of many thousand cases in London, over 50 per cent. were found to have defective vision; but of the country children the proportion was much smaller, only 16 out of 198. In these instances, he attributed the condition of the London children to what he calls "want of exercise" of the eye. "These London children," he says, "never saw distant objects, and were never stimulated to pay attention to small retinal images. They saw the other side of the street, or, perhaps, 50 or 100 yards along its course, and they saw the passing carts and omnibuses and the oranges on a costermonger's barrow, but they never looked for an object on a distant horizon, or for a cunningly concealed bird's nest, or for berries lurking among foliage in a hedgerow. They had never been taught to look at the minute characteristics of a near object, in the way, for example, in which children of the better

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classes would be taught to notice and admire the striation of the petals of flowers or the venation of leaves, or the designs on the plumage of birds and insects. . . . Their colour-sense was comparatively undeveloped."

Very true ; but how many " children of the better classes " are seriously taught these things in London ? where nature-study, as a rule, is limited to the short-lived finery of the parks in spring and early summer, and the sooty sparrows taking dust-baths in the road.

" We walk in the Park in the mornings," said a little girl when asked how she amused herself in London, " and in the afternoons we walk in the Park for a change." The description exactly applies to three sisters who were children thirty years ago, and used to walk twice a day from Bryanston Square into Hyde Park, as far as the statue of Achilles and back again. Sometimes they took the other side of the road, where Lord Byron meditates on a pedestal resembling streaky bacon. Achilles, with nothing on but his shield, was always called by the children " Nannie and her umbrella." I

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forget the origin of this remarkable comparison. It was long before these dreadful days of motors,—but their old nurse was afraid to trust herself and her charges to the long, perilous crossing that runs past the Crescent in Great Cumberland Place. So they always had “to make the round” as she called it, by the houses. They came home with the same general impression of other little girls walking gravely, dressed in their best, and of spring flowers growing gravely too in tidy ranks, each colour by itself in a bed, with black railings around . . . and of the joyful glint of many-hued balloons sold at the entrances to Park Lane. Those balloons were the children’s one excitement.

By way of variety, this part of the Park was sometimes exchanged for the very dull, broad walk that slants across the grass to the right, where there was nothing whatever to think about till one got to the bridge over the Serpentine and could watch the riders in Rotten Row.

Foremost among the joys of the country

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for children is that of having something of their own, whether it be their "own garden" or some pet animal, to tend and care for. Keeping pets in a London nursery is a half-hearted, messy occupation; in the country it is easy: and the pride of responsibility, even if it be only for the welfare of a dormouse, is one of the happiest of all things for little children. It imparts a separate interest to their lives, and gives point to their social instincts. "Shall I take you to see the box of brandy we use for the guinea-pigs?" suggested a little girl who was doing hostess for her mother. "Brandy indeed!" corrected her brother, one year older and wiser than herself; "brand, she means."

To a child with a real love of nature, wild life with its inevitable tragedies small and great brings sorrow, of course, as well as joy; we all know instances of this. I remember the tears of a child over a bird's nest decorated with pink and blue confetti that its little builder had picked up at some one's door after a wedding, when the rain had come and washed the colours out. This sense

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of pity in children may be often rather oddly expressed, but it is none the less beautiful for that. I saw a very small boy once anxiously holding a sprig of sweet geranium as a restorative to the beak of a young blackbird just fallen from the nest.

Endless are the lessons of nature. Let us teach our children something of the industry, patience, and tidiness—that strangely neglected virtue—of the insect world. They can learn economy among other useful accomplishments from the bees, who build their comb so as to be as sparing as possible with the wax. “A bee’s comb consists of two rows of cells which are placed back to back . . . and each cell is produced into a kind of pointed cap. First of all the bees have to make these caps, and they fit those on the one side of the comb so cleverly into those of the other side that each wall serves for two cells. The reason why they do this is that wax is a very valuable substance. It takes some little time to make, and each bee can make only a very small quantity, so that they cannot afford to waste

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it." Mr. Theodore Wood thus describes the bee-builders in one of his charming books on natural history for children; and he tells another story of deeper meaning, a story of sacrifice, and faithfulness even in death, in the action of a very lowly creature called the wood-boring beetle, that always lays its eggs inside a dying, useless tree. "With her sharp black horny jaws," he says, "the mother beetle pierces a round hole in the bark, just large enough for her body to creep through. She then proceeds to cut a hollow groove between the bark and the wood, and makes it branch out right and left in a kind of pattern; and in this groove she lays her eggs carefully, on either side of the centre, till perhaps 120 eggs are laid, and with this toil her strength is completely used up. She can just manage to crawl back to the round hole she made in the bark, and she dies there, her dead body forming a protection for her unborn children from any creature that might come in to eat the eggs." In due time they are hatched, and this new generation of "tiny foresters" continues to

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burrow towards the heart of the old tree, separating the protecting bark from the wood ; then other beetles arrive and work, till all the bark falls away in patches, leaving the stem bare to the winds and weather, and at last the tree falls : old age giving place to young life.

I think we can hardly measure the advantage it is to a child to see and learn these things, and to wake up each morning to the sight of God's beautiful world,—that vision which is hidden from his eyes in great cities.

PLAY-TIME BY THE SEA

PLAY-TIME BY THE SEA

AMONG all the works of Nature, the sea, the children's mighty plaything, in its gentler moods seems made for them alone. It is with a distinct sense of ownership that year by year they come to the seaside and build castles in the sand. These castles vary little in design, and have probably been the same ever since it first occurred to some one to make spades and buckets in small sizes for little hands. The ramparts of the castles, as a rule, are somewhat vague in outline, their sides irregularly flattened by the spade, and the ornament put at frequent intervals along the top is usually strictly limited to the simple form of the contents of the bucket turned upside down. This time-honoured amusement often serves for the one and only occupation of little children by the sea, for in these days most prudent

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parents object to their spending many hours in paddling ; and this restriction cuts them off from the more exciting joys of the shore, where land and water meet. If we can get over this difficulty, however, then shrimping is permissible, and it is one of the most delightful games in the world. How pretty they are, little silver-grey shrimps captive in the net, half hidden in chains of seaweed and other jetsam from the water ; one might fancy they were the ghosts of the rosy-pink things we know on bread-and-butter ; instead of just the reverse. We are always careful never to waste any shrimps that we may bring home to tea, but to make sure that all are cooked and eaten ; for as a little boy once said to me, “ It is so cruel *not* to eat the shrimps when one has caught them ”—a form of charity that we hope they appreciate. The child had got hold of a sound principle, though he had turned it somehow upside down :—that no life, not even a shrimp’s, should be taken for nothing.

Yet a more wonderful sea-sport is scalloping, which I have seen practised on the coasts

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of Scilly, for thereby we come into direct contact with the mind of the scallop: though it is perhaps absurd to talk of its mind; instinct, or intelligence, call it what you will, that exists by a miracle, it seems, inside its headless, shapeless body. If we look into a half-opened scallop-shell containing its living owner, we find nothing but a soft mass of orange-coloured pulp; and at its outer edge there is a beautiful row of starry spots that we believe are its eyes.

The way to "scallop" is to stand ankle-deep in the pretty green sedge at low tide and clap one's hands, and within their fast-shut fan-shaped shells the scallops hear. Do they think the sea, their home, is calling them, or some neighbour and friend of their own? We cannot tell; perhaps they are merely frightened by the sound; at any rate, they answer at once by opening the shells with a strong muscle they have that works the hinge at the back, thus moving themselves along, and at the same time they squirt up a little jet of water through the opening. They are thus easily found and

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collected in a basket. When captive they still go on opening their shells with a clacking noise in response to other calls they hear, but the tiny fountains are stilled for ever. We take the scallops home and they share the fate of the shrimps.¹

These, as I have said, are among the more daring joys of the seashore; but in truth the children need not look for amusement beyond their accustomed playground on the sands; for there, laying spade and bucket awhile aside, we find an endless store of happiness and interest for them that we too often disregard. At their feet lies, spread out for all to see, a page of the Book of

¹ In comparison with these humble molluscs that display such wonderful intelligence considering they have no head at all, many of the fishes, that are higher in the scale of creation, seem surprisingly stupid. Dr. Clouston in his "Hygiene of Mind" tells a story of "a grown-up pike that dashed his head and stunned himself repeatedly for three whole months against a glass partition which separated him from some minnows, and then, after thus painfully learning that he could not attack them with impunity, when they were placed in the aquarium with him, he starved himself in a persistent and senseless manner, and made no attempt to eat them up." See "Pike, a stupid," page 120.

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Creation more marvellous than any fairy story. Why do not their parents read it oftener with them? When a little crab, or jelly-fish, or spray of feathery sea-weed finds its way into the "moat" of their sand-castles, they take it up and examine it half-fearfully, or they collect some shells and bring them home and learn them by heart "as a shepherd knows his sheep"; for the child never yet lived that did not love shells. They make their special appeal to children by their endless variety and lovely colours, their opal-tinted linings, some polished and satiny, others puckered in little ridges like sand fretted by the waves, and the hidden music of the cowries. Yet what do we teach them about these things and the myriad lives of the shore?

They are so familiar to us all, and yet so wonderful that we can hardly tell what they really are; so mysterious too, are those little beings which exist somewhere on the borderline, but dimly defined by Nature, between the flora and fauna of the sea.

It is hard to believe, for instance, that the

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transparent film of slime cast upon the sands to die, that we miscall a jelly-fish, can have any claim to be an animal at all. Yet in life it was a lovely creature gifted with a wonderful phosphorescent brightness, that with thousands of its fellows on summer nights set the sea, as it were, on fire. What we find on the sand is merely its ghost, for the strange and beautiful body, once coloured like a rainbow, has been withered by the sun. It had a mushroom-shaped head, with eyes gleaming all round the rim, and long delicate threads, or tentacles, hanging down as it swayed in the water. The jelly-fish are a vast family. Some, called "Portuguese men-of-war," are like ships with transparent sails of pink and silver; some, again, are chains of gems; but the tiniest jelly-fishes of all are just a drop of brightness. They can be caught in a fine net and put into a vessel of sea-water; but naturalists who have made this experiment say they cannot be watched for long, for they wave their tendrils about a little while, and then melt into nothing.

Close to the sad wraith of the jelly-fish

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we discover a little crab, or perhaps a whole crowd of crabs—many of them hard to distinguish from the sand, for they are the most timid of creatures, and at the sound of man's awful footfall they scramble under any shelter they can find.

There are certain crabs that cannot swim at all; others have broad legs made on purpose to serve them as oars. The young of this family have the peculiarity which is shared by those of the jelly-fish, of being totally unlike their elders. They have a terrible spike sticking out of their backs—terrible, that is, in proportion to their size, a baby-crab being less than half as large as a pea—that mercifully drops off about a week after they are hatched, and a tail which they appear to be ashamed of, for when they are a few weeks old they tuck it away out of sight underneath their body, and leave it there for ever after. Crabs are cruel fighters, always at daggers drawn—or rather at pincers thrust—with some enemy. In youth they have their private anxieties as well, arising from the frequent changes of clothing they

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have to undergo; a ceremony far more serious and dreadful than anything to do with a lady's wardrobe. Four times a year the crab outgrows his tight shelly covering, and being filled "with fear and anxiety" as well he may be, he seeks some quiet refuge screened from the public gaze, and then he swells himself out like the frog in the fable, till he literally bursts, cutting and wounding his poor claws in this violent operation. He has now to wait concealed in his *déshabille* till his coat has hardened anew, and he emerges a brave fighting crab once more.

Another member of this family, called the Hermit from his love of solitude, lives in somebody else's house, preferably a whelk's shell, of which he takes possession by simply murdering the occupant; but he is reduced to sore extremity and the most absurd shifts when he cannot fit comfortably into his stolen residence. "I have often seen a poor little hermit," says Mr. Wood, "forced to take up with a huge whelk-shell, of which only the last whorl remained, and into which he exactly fitted. He was almost at the

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mercy of his habitation, for he could not hold it against the power of the waves, which tumbled it over and over most ruthlessly, while the hermit was making futile grasps at stones and sand by which to arrest his progress."

The same writer describes the anxious care with which a hermit will examine a shell that he contemplates taking for his home, testing it inside and out with his fore-legs, and when satisfied, bundling himself in with the utmost alacrity, making all secure by drawing one of his claws, that Nature has specially made for this purpose much larger and stronger than the other, all over the entrance. Alas! despite all this forethought he may be discovered and pinched to death by the needle-like weapons of the fiddler-crab, inserted through the fast-barred door. Unlike their fully-armed relations, hermit-crabs have a soft, unprotected tail, which they do not tuck away out of sight, but keep in the ordinary position of a tail and treat with the greatest respect. If a hermit in search of a home meets with a shell only

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large enough to take the tip of his tail he will stick it in, attaching it firmly by means of a little hook it has at the end ; and thus poorly housed, he will wander anxiously about till he finds a better lodging.

It is difficult to part with our hermit-crab, he is so funny and interesting. Nature laughs at his morose disposition, for often he is forced to live all his days carrying a sea-anemone on his shell, which has chosen to reside there, and a certain worm frequently shares even his privacy within, and takes the very bread, or fish rather, out of his mouth. When he feels old age approaching, the hermit leaves his long seclusion, and comes forth to end his days in society. This curious habit is contrary to that of most animals, for, as the old servant said of the flies, as a rule "they likes to die private."

Among the common sights of the sea-shore the five-rayed star-fish is as well known to us as any. So still it lies at our feet, we pass it by as a dead thing. Yet if we watch carefully we see it move, curling the tips of its rays when it perceives danger

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near, and at the extremity of each ray, but only visible under a microscope, there is a *winking eye*. It can walk a long distance, for it has more than two thousand feet, or rather suckers that act as feet by a marvelously complicated arrangement, and look like tiny pricklers or pin-points all over the under surface of the body. Nature has lavished the greatest pains and minutest care in fashioning this little creature.

I cannot resist pilfering Mrs. Buckley-Fisher's beautiful description of the starfish's inside, which is surely one of the wonders of the world. "Imagine," she writes, "a round central dome-covered hall, in the floor of which is a trap-door (the mouth) and out of which open five stately arched corridors . . . which begin as lofty galleries and end in a point where a tiny window, its eye, is set. The roof and floor of the corridors are built of delicate white columns and arches of lime, joined by soft ligaments, while the walls are inlaid with star-like plates; and within the dome, and stretching right out into each corridor,

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lies the soft body of the animal, with its digestive organs. The delicate telegraph of nerves, and the water canal starting from the central hall, pass like the wires and pipes of our houses, under the floor of each corridor, while the numberless little water-bags which move the regiment of feet pierce the floor, and lie in the corridor itself." No foe may take liberties with the star-fish as with the hermit-crab, for his back is armed with moving spears, that are never still; and by some means not exactly known, he can even open oyster-shells, a feat impossible to human fingers unaided. The star-fish can spare one or two of its rays, drops them off, and goes its way with only three or four. Another member of this family is called the brittle star, from its habit of throwing its legs away—they soon grow again, however—when it is frightened; and there is a glorious shining thing called the sun star, which is fiery red, and has twelve rays arranged round its body.

Here we must leave the star-fishes, for we want to make one excursion before night-

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fall on the shore : a rather adventurous and slippery journey over low-lying rocks covered with crackling sea-weed, to the still pools where live the lovely sea-anemones. So firmly do they hold to the rock by a kind of suction that it needs some skill to detach them without injury. They are really animals, despite their flower-like form, disclosed by the untwining of their petals, which has won for them the name of "daisies of the sea." When these petals expand in search of food, the common anemone displays a row of jewel-like spots set all round its crown, which are bright blue as the sky. Truly the anemones are clever fishermen ; they have but to wave their beautiful fingers and they encircle any small creature they fancy, shrimp or mussel or limpet, with a deadly grasp.

Our day is ended, and we have explored but the outskirts of this fairyland on the shore. But play-time is long, and in summer hours by the sea the children can go on learning more and more about those other "children of life." Little by little

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they will realise the wonderful patience that has made every creature so minutely perfect, though it may be hidden far from human sight; and they will know that the humblest living thing reflects the Creator's glory, as every ripple on the water bears its own little image of the sun. The praise of God in Nature is the great song as old as earth itself: and it is our part to make our children listen.

WHEN WINTER COMES

WHEN WINTER COMES

“C’EST l’heure de bien faire.” We all feel the truth of this precept, though we practise it in greatly varying degrees, when the days begin to shorten perceptibly, and the poor have to “brave up” as best they can for the long winter. In summer they have, or they seem to have, fewer needs; everything is easier when the sun shines: in southern countries it wins half the battle for the poor. With us, they look forward each year with fresh interest to the little events that brighten their lives in the winter; and as we go on our dim round among the poor and needy through the fast-darkening days, there is much hope that good may come.

Disappointments will come, too; but I think they would be fewer, in women’s work among poor women, if we tried to get into closer touch with them. Many good and

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capable women, who have energy and initiative and excellent gifts of organisation, have not the smallest idea what to say to their poorer sisters in ordinary life, and yet there is no other way of getting to know them. Poor women are quick to respond and show sympathy, they love to hear what we have to tell them ; but an awkward or inarticulate visitor defeats her own kindly intention, and it becomes miserably unfruitful. She takes refuge in a book, and reads it aloud ; but she finds this rarely appreciated by the listener. "There is one thing I envy the rich for," said an old woman to me ; "when they are sick, they needn't be read to." The human touch is what is needed ; some vivifying spark kindled in the often drab and dreary atmosphere of good works. We rely too much on organisation ; without it, of course, no work can be maintained ; but it is a cold thing in itself. Take the weekly mothers' meeting for instance ; usually it forms the one relief and change in the lives of the members. It might be made much brighter and more useful if the presiding lady herself

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would give simple talks to them when the business part and the inevitable story-reading are over. This should not be difficult, for there are ten thousand things to say, that might help and teach and interest them; we have all Scripture to draw from; and great lives in history, stories and legends and saints; and it is wonderful to find how even the simplest and poorest of the listeners will follow and understand. They have imagination, which is rare in the classes immediately above them. An inexperienced speaker is no doubt likely to be nervous at first; nevertheless it ought to be possible for us all to say something cheering and suggestive, simple, but neither childish nor twaddling, to a few working women. Much might be written on the misfortune of twaddle, that fatal hindrance to the force of good. We wrap the great truths of God in twaddle, and prevent their ever reaching the hearts of those who listen. It is not quite easy to define twaddle, for where it exists it is always linked with good intentions; but the poor have clear perceptions, and they

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never fail to recognise it. Let us remember that they are not children ; let us always try to help them to lift their eyes to the hills.

There are other mistakes to avoid in speaking to poor women. There is, for instance, the persistently facetious tone adopted by many good workers among the poor ; it tends to become foolish and trivial, and it often jars on the deep and sorrowful realities of their lives. On the other hand, it is a pity to go to the opposite extreme and make them cry, by telling pathetic stories and the like. This is a cheap and easy way of holding their attention, for the poor certainly love to cry ; it gives them a dismal kind of joy, but they have enough tears already without our adding to them. A lady told me that she always cried herself when addressing mothers, for the occasion seemed to call for it, she thought ; and as there is nothing so infectious as grief, I have seen her entire audience weeping. Another mistake, I think, is the apologetic tone. I have heard a speaker constantly interrupt herself with such a phrase as “ Bear with me,” or “ I hope you will forgive me for

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telling you " something which she has come a long distance, perhaps, through wind and weather, on purpose to say. Poor people do not understand this ; they like a speaker to strike a confident note, as without it, they receive the impression that she does not mean what she is saying.

When, however, we go the right way to work, we find their sympathy and confidingness meet us more than half way. They have humour too, which if it is not quite hidden away and lost in the strife of things, does shine out of the shadows in the most unexpected places, comforting them even in anxiety and disappointment. It is a gift almost entirely lacking to the solemn middle classes of this country. An old woman, a cripple, told me that she was asked by a lady to mend some rugs for a consideration. When she received them, she found they were large, heavy squares of carpet ; but by dint of long and painful effort, she mended them all. " I made out the bill," she said ; " it came to canvas and sundries, 2s. 11d. and labour, 1s. I was afraid of offending if

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I asked more for the work. My boy, he walked two miles there and back with them when I had finished; he had to make two journeys. The lady sent me 4s. and told me I *needn't return the penny.*" I confess I failed to see the humour of the story, but Mrs. Sylvester thought this the best possible joke. She laughed over that penny till, from excess of mirth, the tears ran down her worn old face.

Those of us who see a little into the lives of the poor, are apt to think we know and understand all; yet not till we have long watched them can we fully realise the stillness of the closing chapters, those slow years when many wait—so tenacious are they, physically, of life—on the very threshold of the unseen world. Little by little, as day follows day, all things take on the same colours; the small events which mark the hours lose all significance at last, lights that still flicker through the shades of evening. I asked an old woman in a workhouse what kind of entertainment was given them at Christmas. "There's nothing much that I

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know of," she answered ; " we go and hear the children sing a song and say their piece. It's always the same piece," she added. " What are you telling the lady that for ? " chimed in another inmate sitting by : she was younger and quicker of wit than my friend. " The children learn a different song and say a new piece, every Christmas. Thank God it's over now ; Gov'ness, she's fairly wore out, teaching those little mites." " Well now, it seemed to me always the same piece," said the old dame placidly.

In the workhouse infirmary there lies a woman who has been blind for twenty years. She is quite resigned and happy : as one of her companions told me, " she bears it most comfortable." But I think it will not last much longer now ; she will be free soon. Her son is employed at a school some way off. Once a week, when he is allowed a couple of hours to himself, he spends them at his mother's bedside. For years past he has never failed her. I was in the ward for the best part of an hour one day when the two were together, and all that time not

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one word passed between them. There was nothing in all the world to say. They will talk to each other in heaven, after the long silence here in the twilight, where nothing ever happens, and the children always sing the same song.

AN OLD CHURCH LIBRARY

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AFTER the fall of the monasteries in England, wealthy patrons of learning in various districts tried to make good the loss of monastic libraries by gifts of books to the parish churches. In his work on "The Care of Books" Mr. John Willis Clark describes several of these collections that are still in existence: in the Parish Church of Grantham in Lincolnshire for instance, at all Saints' Church in Hereford, and in various churches and chapels in Lancashire. One was founded by Sir John Kederminster in 1623 at Langley Marish, or Maries, in Buckinghamshire, "as well for the perpetual benefit of the Vicar and Curate of the parish of Langley, as for all other ministers and preachers of God's word as would resort thither to make use of the books therein."

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The first Kederminster whom history can trace was squire of Langley under Henry VIII. His descendant, John Kederminster, who lived in the reign of James I., with his wife, Elizabeth Wilford, five sons and daughters and nine grandchildren, has come down to our day figured on the double monument that adorns the chancel wall in Langley Church. Through relationship of his mother Anne Leigh with the Boleyn family, Sir John, grandson of John Kederminster, is able to style himself in his inscription "Cousin German thrice removed to Queen Elizabeth."

In a very interesting description of Langley published last year in "Country Life" the history of Sir John Kederminster's benefactions to the parish church are given in detail, for it was he whose "good desire it was to add an 'Ile or Chappell' on to the south side of the church" whence he could better hear "Godly sermons," and also "for ever to have within the said Ile or Chappell many good and Godly Bookes." The words stand thus in the faculty for which he applied to

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the patrons of the parish, the Dean and Canons of Windsor; and in this document Sir John's titles are given as Chief Steward of the two Royal Manors of Langley and Wraysbury, and master of all His Majesties games within his said Mannors and Parke of Langley Marish."

The parish church of Langley can be reached by a footpath over the meadows, from the station on the Great Western line between Windsor and London. The immediate surroundings of the church—which chiefly consist of brickfields—are not inspiring; and beyond them the flat landscape, even on bright summer days, is grave and sombre. To the north lies a beautifully wooded track of country, forming part of the ancient manor of Langley, which is called Black Park from the gloom of its dark forest trees. Close by the church, on either side of it north and south, is a row of fine crimson-brick almshouses. Of these the earlier four are contemporary with the Library, and bear the shield of the Kederminsters; the other building was founded twenty years

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later by Henry Seymour, who succeeded Sir John in the lordship of the manor.

One day, on a bleak, dreary afternoon in midwinter, I knocked at the door of one of the older almshouses. In the churchyard, and in the old trees overhead, nothing stirred—only a robin hopped about over the grass in search of food; his feathers being all puffed up in the cold gave him a fictitious air of stoutness and prosperity. Failing to find anything in the frozen ground to support life, he gave up the search; and perching on the headstone of a grave, began to sing instead. The old inmate of the almshouse answered my knock and request that she should show me the library. I admired the arrangement of her tiny garden, with its reminiscence of last summer's pride. "It's nothing much to look at now," she said, "but I'm thankful for the bloom I 'ave 'ad." I wondered what brightness her life had known, that shed itself even now over the close: for she was the picture of the peace of evening.

Together we crossed the churchyard and in the south wall of the church she unlocked

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a narrow painted door. We stood in a curious oblong chamber, the "Ile or Chappell" of good Sir John Kederminster. Ever since his day it has served as the family pew of the owners of Langley.

It has casements with windows of beautiful pierced woodwork, which ensure the strictest privacy for the worshippers within; they open on to an enclosed space paved in black and white marble, which is separated from the nave below by a grand eighteenth-century screen with iron gates, and a broad flight of stairs. Beneath this pavement Kederminsters and their successors lie buried, and over them tattered banners hang—won in the Civil Wars. "The windows are opened when they c'lect," my guide explained; and she proceeded to point out the painted decoration of the pew—quaint device of coats of arms interspersed with texts, and among them a solemn watching eye many times repeated, bearing the words "Deus videt" inscribed across it.

For the safe housing of his books, Sir John extended his original scheme, and transformed the porch itself, which now

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opens into the pew, with its great fireplace and heavily barred window, to serve as a library. It remains untouched since his day, a small panelled room lined with cupboards containing his books; and every side and panel of the cupboards is painted with little figures on a black ground, and a design in heraldry. Above these runs a frieze composed of various scenes and landscapes, much dimmed with age; Eton Schoolyard and Windsor Castle are among them, and a fine house standing in a courtyard represents the old Hall at Langley before it was rebuilt a century and a half ago. Another panel shows some grand lords and ladies walking on a terrace in a flower-garden. On the inner side of one of the cupboard doors is a portrait in very good preservation of the donor of the library; he wears a dark doublet slashed with pink and white, and a broad turn-down collar in the Jacobean fashion. Opposite Sir John Kederminster is Dame Mary his wife, her beauty entirely concealed by a veil of brown paint. Whose petty spite was it, that thus outraged

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the gentle lady of Langley? We cannot tell; but when the sun reaches her through the old diamond window-panes, it is as though she just stirred into life again. "You can make out her features then," my guide said, "and you can see the lady had a pretty face." Below the two portraits are rough representations of open books, and in the middle of the centre wall hangs a framed list drawn up by some one long ago, of the contents of the library.

Many of the books are in a dreadful state of neglect and decay, and it would grieve their donor's heart to see them, for they fall asunder in one's hand. They are all bound alike in the familiar golden-brown leather, and a great part have the Kederminster arms tooled on them in gold. I searched each one, but alas in vain, for No. 244 "*Pharmacopolum p^r J. & M. Kederminster*," described by the writer in "*Country Life*," the family recipe book of the careful housewife of Langley. He quotes some of the entries. "A Medicine to comfort the Heart, that will comfort and strengthen the hearte very much" is com-

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posed of "good ale" warmed up and flavoured with bay leaves. "Purchas, Pilgrimies" I found; and one or two books of a secular character, but the bulk of the library of course is devotional. On an old oak table lay a great Hebrew Bible; and on a loose sheet in it there was a series of entries in a rather trembling hand made by some very diligent and pious student of the Scriptures, a modern St. Jerome, who was in the habit, it seems, of coming here every day to read. The list opens at "Jan. 1700. I began to read this Hebrew Bible again the fourth time—may the spirit of holiness enable me to go through it for the sanctification and salvation of my sinful soul." "I finished the fourth time of the reading of this Hebrew Bible by the grace of God."

The Psalms are taken through many times, day by day, from beginning to end. "1700. xvii Febr. finished the Psalms again the eighteenth time"—"finished the Psalms again the nineteenth time," and so on to the last entry, which sounds the same note of humble thankfulness for duty done :

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“1701. I finished the Psalms again by the mercy of my Saviour.” The writing seems feebler at the end, and the rest of the page is blank. It is as though a veil were drawn here, and this careful searcher for the light had been taken away to find it in heaven.

Another book I opened was a seventeenth-century devotional treatise containing long exhortations to godliness, curiously spelt and worded. All the time I was reading my guide stayed by me, and did “not depart from thence” in obedience to the rule laid down by Sir John Kederminster’s daughters, to be observed for all time by the guardians of the library, and faithfully obeyed to this day.

The old lady talked of half-forgotten things, memories of those who are sleeping in the church close by, bits of history of the place, all mixed up in the recital and very difficult to follow. She is extremely proud of her trust, which, divided first among the four original occupants of the almshouses under Sir John’s will, is vested now in her alone. “It would never do for a gad-about to have charge of the books,” she

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said ; “ the squire, he don’t like me to be much away from home.” And I should think that within the memory of man she has never been further than the churchyard gate. One of her duties is to see that there is never any lack of firewood, which she stores in a cupboard level with the ground. The door of the cupboard has long since “dropped” on its hinges, and when opened it scrapes along the floor with a loud groan. The big logs are very cumbersome, and the fireplace is extravagantly large for the little room. “It do burn a lot o’ them logs,” she told me, “and they be that ’eavy, it’s all I can do to lift ’em.” There was always this provision for the convenience of students in parish libraries. In 1642 one of the patrons of the library at Grantham, “out of his love and well-wishing to learning and to encourage the Vicars of Grantham to pursue their studies in the winter time, gave fifty shillings, the yearly interest thereof to provide firewood for the library fire.”

Evening fell in that quiet place as I stayed reading, and my companion still went on

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telling, half to herself, things of long ago ; and it was as though I heard two voices there, for the words on the old pages seemed to live again, giving their divine message once more after long silence :—

“ Hee was weary, but promised rest to all them that are weary and come unto him ; hee slept, but waking stilled the tempest . . . hee prayed, but hearing our prayers ; hee wept, but wipeth all tears from our eyes ; hee was sold for thirty pence, but redeemed the world with a great and inestimable price : hee was led as a sheepe to the slaughter, but hee is the great shepheard that feedeth the Israel of God. . . .”

THE ROOD SCREEN IN
TRIMINGHAM CHURCH

THE ROOD SCREEN IN TRIMINGHAM CHURCH

SOME five miles east of Cromer, on the highest hill in the county, though indeed it can hardly be called a hill, Norfolk having only gentle rolling undulations like its own sea on quiet days, stands the little church of Trimingham. We reach it by way of the footpath that follows the line of the cliffs from Cromer to Mundesley, within sound of the crumbling sand-walls which break away now and again with a noise like thunder, and fall in huge masses on to the beach 300 feet beneath. There are traces of ancient forest that once clothed those shores, splintered fragments of great tree-stems standing now in the sea, which show how far in former times the land extended and in course of ages has shrunk away and vanished. Added to this natural

THE ROOD SCREEN

danger of the cliffs, the dwellers on the Norfolk shores in mediæval times lived in constant dread of pirates. "God give grace that the see may be better kepte than it is now," wrote Margaret Paston to her son, midway in the fifteenth century, "or ellys it shall ben a perylous dwellyng by the se cost."

Trimingham Church is very humble compared with the proud, splendid shrines in the neighbouring parishes of Northrepps, Southrepps and Knapton: the last-named has a wonderful roof of Irish oak supported by great angels playing instruments of music, their wings outspread. These churches, like many another in Norfolk and Suffolk, stand lonely and desolate now, their solemn grey towers watching over a few poor hamlets clustering at their feet: all that remain of flourishing centres in bygone days of wool-weaving industries carried on by Flemish colonists. These were swept down by the Black Death which ravaged England three separate times.

Such life as may once have existed around

IN TRIMINGHAM CHURCH

little Trimingham Church has now, too, departed. A lych-gate leads to an avenue across the churchyard, and close by is the tomb of eight Dutch sailors who were found dead on board a shipwrecked vessel beneath the cliffs. Within, the bare little building has one beautiful adornment which has mercifully escaped the restorer's hands: a rood screen dating from the first decade of the sixteenth century, whereon an unknown artist—probably some Flemish craftsman settled in Norwich—has painted eight panels with figures of saints. At that date there were scores of such screens in Norfolk and Suffolk churches; of these some fifty or more are, or were until recently, in existence in varying states of preservation. One in Trunch Church, some miles distant from Trimingham, is painted with figures of the Twelve Apostles. The faces of these are all ruined, but the vestments are very beautiful.

The framework of the Norfolk rood screens was in almost every instance gilt and coloured. Traces of colour can still be

THE ROOD SCREEN

seen on the Trimingham screen, and delicate ornamental borders remain between the panels.

Taking the saints in their present order from left to right, we find first, St. Edmund King and Martyr, in royal robes, holding an arrow in his right hand and a sceptre in his left; second, St. Clara, Abbess, with a monstrance in her right hand; third, St. Clement Martyr, third Bishop of Rome and fellow-labourer of St. Paul, who holds a long staff with a cross in his left hand and has an anchor at his feet; fourth, St. John the Baptist, patron saint of Trimingham Church, in camel-hair cloak and dark tunic. On the four panels of the other side are St. Petronilla, the reputed daughter of St. Peter; St. Dorothea, crowned with a wreath of roses; St. Cecilia; and last, St. Edward King and Martyr, with a falcon on his wrist. In each of the spandrils in the framework above these figures is a carved and painted emblem. St. Edmund and St. Clara have Tudor roses with three rows of petals. Over the head of St.

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Clement is a curious spiral flower; above John the Baptist is the saint's head on a charger; St. Petronilla has the Baptist's lamb; and over the figures of St. Cecilia and St. Edward are again Tudor roses, with four rows of petals.

St. Edmund, the great saint of East Anglia, is present in nearly every scheme of mediæval church decoration in this part of England. There is a splendour around his figure in legend, which shines all down the ages. His birth was foretold to his father the Saxon Prince Alkmund, while on a pilgrimage to Rome, by a marvellous sign. "In praying a brilliant sun displayed its glories on his breast," which proved to be the promise of his child; and Edmund grew up to become King of East Anglia, and reign over a magnificent court, after his kinsman's death. On first reaching these shores he knelt down and prayed for God's protection; and as he prayed, springs of fresh water began to stream forth from the dry and sandy soil; such springs as flow from their hiding-places amidst the cliffs on the

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Norfolk shores to-day, and mingle with the sea.

We can find no special link among these saints in the screen with St. Clara of Assisi ; but in the days when the four great mendicant orders, and pre-eminently the Franciscan, were all powerful in England, Norfolk may well have possessed a Convent of Poor Clares ; which would account for the presence here of the holy friend of St. Francis. St. Clement is patron of scores of churches in this country. It may be that the dwellers by the sea held his memory in special reverence, for the story runs that when his enemies, during the persecution of the Christians by the Emperor Trajan, bound him to an anchor and cast him into the sea, the waves miraculously retreated for three miles, and his body was found in a little submerged temple that they thus laid bare, with the anchor round his neck.

Trimingham Church in old days contained a relic which was believed to be the head of John the Baptist. In one of the will-books of Norwich is the testament of

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one Alice Cook of Horstead, in which she writes: "I wyll have a man to go on pilgrimage to St. John hys hede at Trymmyngham." Sta. Petronilla was much venerated at Bury in Suffolk, the great shrine of St. Edmund, for an old hospital for lepers there, now long since demolished, bore her name. The sick and sorrowful put themselves under her protection, perhaps in remembrance of her legend, which tells how her father willed her to suffer pain for Christ's sake and lie on a bed of sickness "because she was too beautiful." Then when St. Peter judged that her soul had begun to perfect itself in the love of God, he restored her to health: and a great noble of Rome sought her hand in marriage. In answer she simply bade him go and send maidens to take her to his home; but when he had departed and they had come, she began instead of going with them to fast and pray, asking God to save her from being a heathen's bride; and her prayer was granted, for in three days she died.

She stands on the old panel, sweet and

THE ROOD SCREEN

gracious, holding holy emblems in her hand, unconscious of the dreadful sequel to the little stratagem by which she got rid of her suitor and gained her final deliverance. For finding himself deceived, we read in the "Golden Legend," he next courted one of her companions named Felicula; and she also resisting him, he flung her into prison, and put her to a cruel death.

Petronilla, shortened in ordinary speech into Parnell, as also Cecilia and Dorothea in their English forms of Cicely and Dorothy, were common Christian names in the sixteenth century, and these three saints were beloved and familiar in the home life of this country, wherefore it is not surprising to find them here in a village church. St. Edward, the beautiful royal youth with flowing hair and diadem, dear to early art in England, was endowed also with the grace of healing. A light from heaven shone continually on his burial-place at Wareham, and the sick flocked thither to his tomb.

This company of saints, their tender

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colours mellowed by many years, shed still a brightness through the little church ; and the screen itself is a remarkable instance of a craft which, with wonderful vitality, preserved its traditions unharmed through all changes. For when the Reformation, and again, a century later, the Puritan Revolution, laid a destroying hand on all that savoured of the Roman ritual, the churches were stripped, their bells were disposed of by public lottery or " outcry " as it was called ; and the roods, of course, were torn down.

Yet the beautiful work of the skilled wood-wrights was suffered to remain : carved roofs, screens, and bench-ends, with here and there a lovely baptistery, for the most part escaped the general wreck.

In many an East Anglian church these still survive, memorials of a living faith.

OLD WINDSOR CHURCH

OLD WINDSOR CHURCH

“SEPT. 23 (Sun.) 1722. The Church of Old Windsor in Berks is ancient, and consists of one Isle, in w^{ch} is an octagon font (in the angles of which are a W, a Cross, 2 cross keys, a Rose, a Lilly, an anchor, and 2 defaced). There are also in that Church some Remains of old painted glass, very much ruined, only some little Arms and Devices remaining, among which an Eagle playing upon a Kettledrum, with sticks in each claw. Another bird playing on a Lute, or such like Instrument of Musick. A Man's head, very fair and entire, with a cross raised above his forehead. In the same window, in old Norman spelling: ‘pries pour laulm’; before the Glass was broke was added: ‘de Ralph Tyle’ as my learned friend, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Girdler (from whom I had these things by Letter, dated at Old Windsor, Sept. 10, 1722) was informed by the worthy Vicar. The grave

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Stone is underneath, which is a large stone coffin, jetting out of the wall, on which was fixed a Brass plate, eaten up by age, with an image of a man and woman roughly delineated, and these words, before the repairs of the Church much plainer than at present, in the same Norman spelling: ‘Raulf Tyle et sa femme icy sont enterrez; dieu de leur ame aye pitie.’ In the neighbourhood, under the next window, is a slip of brass, much more modern & entire, on which is written the 2 following Lines, in old letters, but the same spelling:—‘Orate pro amina Thome Tyle, quondam Constabular. Castri de Wynd’sor, qui obiit ibidem XVII die Januarij, anno domini millesimo CCC^o LXXX^o nono.’ ”

Having lighted by chance on this paragraph among the “Remarks and Collections” of Thomas Hearne, the Oxford diarist, I journeyed to Old Windsor one day, that I might find out whether the church still remains as he described it nearly two centuries ago. Since early Plantagenet days it has stood, near the site of the old palace of

OLD WINDSOR CHURCH

Edward the Confessor on the right bank of the Thames. The massive outer walls bear witness to its age, so also do the great yews that droop their heavy branches over the graves in the disused churchyard. I passed under the porch, hung with white clematis, into the nave, and found the "octagon font" and its angles deeply carved, just as Hearne noted them, only still further defaced by time.

In the tracery of the window above the font is a fragment of old glass with the letters T.T. enclosed in a decorated border, which probably stand for Thomas Tyle, the Constable of Windsor Castle. Beneath these is one little golden-haired angel under a canopy, left alone where, it may be, many angels once were shining. I looked in vain for the bird-orchestra described by Hearne, the eagle with his chopsticks "playing upon a kettledrum, and another bird playing on a lute"—their minstrelsy, such as it was, has ceased long ago; but six most attractive dragons in a window of the north wall have fortunately been spared by the unknown

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spoilers of the church. They are crouching two and two opposite each other, their necks intertwined; they have beautiful wings like purple flames, and their bodies shine with silver scales. Feeling much comforted by the dragons, I noticed next an interesting brass which has been raised from the floor of the church to its present position on the south wall. This is the family monument of one "Humfrey Michell, Esquire and Survayor of Queene Elizabeth's Castle of Windsor," who founded a scholarship at Queen's College, Oxford. The inscription records that this gentleman had "Twoe wifes" and the portrait brass of one of the ladies is beside his own. The trimming of her graceful garments might serve for our present fashion; down the whole length of her skirt the folds are caught with ornamental clasps, completed with little tassels. At her husband's left side is his kinsman "Samuell Michell, Late Sarvant to King James, Being one of his Mat^{jes} Marshalls of ye Hall." Of the other brasses no trace remains, and of "the grave

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Stone," only its canopied recess under one of the windows.

Such are the few treasures that yet remain of other days in Old Windsor Church. In the last century, the predecessor of the present incumbent added to the nave, from the designs of Sir Gilbert Scott, its beautiful oak vaulted roof in place of the old ceiled one, and the organ-chamber opening out of the choir. There are two aumbries—which is unusual—and a double piscina. Without, the grand old building is greatly in need of repair ; the spire is faced with oak slabs which are gradually becoming detached, and fall to the ground : one lay at my feet as I passed beneath. It is indeed sad and strange that in the apparently rich neighbourhood of Windsor none should offer to save the church from further decay.

Through the kindness of the vicar, I was enabled to see the parish registers, and tried to discover some mention of "restorations" carried out in the eighteenth century ; but we found merely the usual record of parish affairs and long lists of forgotten names.

OLD WINDSOR CHURCH

Among the burials, however, one entry is of more than local interest; it reads simply "Mary Robinson," and the date, December 1800. This was no other than the unfortunate Perdita the actress, heroine of a romance that once set all London talking, and to whom her Florizel, George Prince of Wales, vowed eternal faithfulness. *Je ne change qu'en mourant* was engraved on a miniature that he gave her, and that she treasured long after he had cast her aside. She came to a cottage in Englefield Green in Surrey to die, and begged—she who all her life had had a passion for display—that she might be buried as simply as possible in Old Windsor Churchyard. Her tomb is close under the east wall of the church; it is adorned with verses, the humble homage of some obscure admirer, who recalls how for her, the "fairest of the fair"—

"Sorrow prepared a willowy wreath of woe,
Mix'd lurid nightshade with the buds of May,
And twin'd her darkest cypress with the bay."

The snows of a hundred winters and some kind of moss or lichen that clings to the

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stone have done their best to efface this last tribute to Perdita's memory, and several lines are almost lost.

Poor Mary Robinson! she rests now in peace, and her story is best forgotten. Her matchless beauty—which faded and perished before she died—lives still, in glorious defiance of time, on the canvases of Gainsborough and Reynolds.

MONTREUIL

MONTREUIL

MONTREUIL-SUR-MER, an ancient fortified town of Picardy, was in the old coaching days the first stopping-place for travellers bound for Paris from the North. They passed beneath its grand gateway, now alas ! disfigured with frightful posters, that was once guarded by sentries, and they “lay” at the pretty little inn that still stands, six centuries old, built round a courtyard, called the Hotel de France. Many a fight in the wars of Marlborough and Napoleon has raged round Montreuil in the past. From very ancient times the town was a military station, and is so still ; but all other life seems now to have forsaken it. Montreuil to-day stands on a branch line of the railway, beyond Etaples, at only a short distance from Boulogne, but very few travellers think of turning aside from the main route to visit

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it. Even the sea has retreated, ever further and further, so that Montreuil-sur-Mer, although its old name still survives, is now a dozen miles from the coast. But the town has had its great days. Cardinal Wolsey stayed in Montreuil on his way to Amiens at the time of his famous embassy to Francis I., and in the "Life of Wolsey" written by his gentleman usher, George Cavendish, we read of the wonderful pomp with which "for the more advancement of his master's royal dignity," the great minister set forth on his journey. On Mary Magdalen's Day, 1527, "my Lord Cardinal rode out of Calais with such a number of black velvet coats as hath not been seen with an ambassador. All the spears of Calais, Guies, and Hammes, were there attending upon him in that journey, in black velvet coats, and many great and massy chains of gold were worn then. Thus passed he forth with three gentlemen in a rank, which occupied the length of three quarters of a mile or more, having all his accustomed and glorious furniture carried before him. . . ."

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After a magnificent reception at Boulogne, where he “made his prayers” and gave his blessing to the people, he rode on to Montreuil, where he was received “by the worshipfullest of the town, all in one body, having one learned that made an oration before him in Latin, whom he answered in like manner in Latin; and as he entered into the town, there was a canopy of silk embroidered with the letters and hat that was on the servants’ coats, borne over him by the persons of most estimation within the town. And when he was alighted his footmen”—in very discourteous haste it would seem—“seized the same as a fee due to their office. Now was there made divers pageants for joy of his coming, who was called there, and in all other places within the realm of France as he travelled, *Cardinalis Pacificus*.”

Matters proceeded smoothly between Wolsey and Francis, and a treaty was signed at Amiens on August 16th of that year. Henry graciously thanked the Cardinal for his services, “which cannot,” he wrote to him, “be by a kind master forgotten, of

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which fault I trust I shall never be accused, especially to you-ward, which so laboriously do serve me." Yet on Wolsey's return to England the King greeted him coldly. "It was supposed among us," writes his devoted servant, "that my lord should be joyfully received at his home-coming, as well of the King as of all other noblemen; but we were deceived in our expectations."

Thus was first foreshadowed the great minister's fall.

In the following year, October 1528, we find Cardinal Campeggio arrived at Montreuil on his way to England, bearer of a solemn commission from the Pope to establish a "court-judicial" that should give judgment on the question of Henry's intended divorce of Katharine of Arragon. Charged with this momentous duty, the unfortunate legate was still further burdened with the gout, which so terribly tormented him "that he was carried in a litter, his feet being not able to abide the *sqwasse* of the stirrup, or his hand to hold the bridle."

Montreuil has scarcely altered since the

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days of Wolsey and Campeggio. Its wide streets, though silent and desolate now, are still the same; the grand old houses of its dead *noblesse*, even the beautiful water mill beside the willow-bordered stream that flows below the walls, are standing yet unharmed by time, in the deep quiet that now broods over them for ever. We may look in again at the Hotel de France, and revive another scene, this time of less world-shaking import, which took place some two hundred years after Cardinal Campeggio's painful entry into the town. On the first floor of the inn is a bare little room, with an ancient uneven floor and a wall paper painted in grisaille with processions of nymphs and goddesses; they seem a little weary now, pacing slow, with dim semblance of festivity, for ever round the room. There we find Sterne, then making his famous Sentimental Journey, engaged in hiring a French valet, La Fleur, to attend him on his way to Italy: "a faithful, affectionate, simple soul as ever trudged after the heels of a philosopher," who had but one fault, and that a light one

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in his master's eyes, that he was "always in love";—gifted, moreover, with such hilarity of heart and countenance, that "whether it was hunger or thirst, or cold or nakedness, or whatever stripes of ill-luck they met with" in their journeyings, "La Fleur was eternally the same." Such "festivity of temper," at all times a boon on a long journey, must have been of priceless worth in the heroic travelling of those days. It appears that Sterne arrived at Montreuil unattended and in sorry plight:—

"I had once lost my portmanteau from behind my chaise, and twice got out in the rain," he says, "and one of the times up to the knees in dirt, to help the postilion to tie it on . . . without being able to find out what was wanting. Nor was it till I got to Montreuil, upon the landlord's asking me if I wanted not a servant, that it occurred to me, that that was the very thing."

The next morning La Fleur entered on his duties, fastened his master's portmanteau containing his "half-a-dozen shirts and silk pair of breeches" with other effects, upon

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the chaise, and got the horses put to for the continuance of the journey.

So the two set out, La Fleur cantering away before the chaise "as happy and perpendicular as a king" when he had said his last tender farewells to the wenches gathered round him. "'C'est un garçon de bonne fortune,' said the landlord: 'the young fellow is beloved by all in the town,' as the boy kissed all their hands round and round again, and thrice he wiped his eyes. . . ."

Here we must leave the sentimental pair, and let the curtain rise on one last picture of Montreuil, that brings us to our own days. We find it in a diary written by one still living, who with his parents travelled in their own family coach all the way from Bedfordshire to Rome in 1847.

He thus describes their equipment: "It consists of two carriages—a closed carriage or chariot, holding three inside, with a rumble behind for the maid, and an open carriage or phaeton." At intervals on the journey, where the line was completed, the party travelled by rail; but they still

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remained in the carriages, which were placed on trucks attached to the train. On embarking at Folkestone, "the two carriages were duly hoisted on cranes, and deposited on the deck of a steamer. The sea was rough, and the cabins were paved with sufferers." The writer's father, a country Rector and Canon of Windsor, "took refuge in his own closed carriage, where he remained during the whole of the passage." It must have been an unforgettable scene, the prudent entry, in those untoward circumstances, of the old Church dignitary into "his own closed carriage"—it almost comes to life again as we watch it across sixty years. . . . After a few hours' halt at Boulogne, four horses were attached to the one carriage and two to the other, and the family set out for their first resting-place at Montreuil, where passports had to be produced, and many a barrier passed, before they were allowed to proceed to the Hotel de France. Leaving Montreuil next morning at daybreak, they posted forty-three miles to Abbeville, the progress of the journey being occasionally

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hindered by lively disputes between the French postilions as to which carriage should go first; and so the stately old-world cavalcade moved on its way down the long road to Rome.

These memories came back to me as I sat one spring day on the high ramparts at Montreuil. The blossom of the wild cherry trees that clothed the steep banks below, stirred by the breeze, was like a sea of foam tossed against the glorious old walls; and the great plain of Picardy lay sleeping at our feet. It was as though the peace of all the long years that have passed over the old town, their strife forgotten, were gathered up there. Then, suddenly, a painfully familiar sound broke on the stillness, and rounding the hill, a motor, with its horrid horn and whirlwind of dust, dashed down the sunny road.

FAENZA

FAENZA

FROM the great towns and the crowded new life of modern Italy it is a relief to turn aside to some out-of-the-way place left unstarred in the guide-books, which therefore the obedient tourist, little heeding, passes by. One April morning early we left Bologna, and travelled through the sunlit monotonous plains, between endless rows of mulberry trees hung with long chains of the budding vine, to quiet, old-world Faenza.

It was not yet mid-day when we arrived, and the market was in full swing beneath the huge white and green umbrellas. There were white sacks full of bright yellow polenta and macaroni; there were little sweet medlars (*nespoli*) and sun-dried, shrivelled figs: and on the poulterers' stalls were ranged rows of lean, tiny chickens,

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their poor tail-feathers presenting an absurd appearance, still sticking up bravely as in life. Despite all we hear of foreign competition and the failure of poultry farming in England, give me a Norfolk fowl before any continental one.

At one end of the piazza a cloth fair was being held, and close by a man like a talking-machine was driving a brisk trade in penny magnifying glasses, which were, he said, a public safeguard against fraud, for with their aid one could detect cotton in so-called woollen stuffs, and margarine in butter. This pedlar seemed to be by far the most prosperous tradesman in Faenza. An effort is being made in the town to revive its old *faience* industry of the fifteenth century. Some fine old specimens of their pottery are shown in the Museo, and a few poor little curiosity-shops sell broken fragments, beautiful in colour and design.

Five hundred years ago Florentine artists worked in Faenza, and built its grand cathedral. It contains the tomb of San Savino, a beautiful work of Benedetto da

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Majano ; and also the tomb of San Terenzio, with his story told on it in wonderful low relief, as delicate as though it were graven on the marble, by the great Sienese sculptor, Agostino di Duccio. Besides these, Faenza owns one supreme treasure in the Picture Gallery, Donatello's—some say Desiderio da Settignano's—marble bust of John the Baptist as a child, called the Giovannino. We almost failed to get into the Gallery at all. The collection forms part of the Museo Civico, which is at only a few minutes' distance from the market-place ; but we found the door locked ; all was silent and deserted.

A notice posted up on the wall invited us to ring the bell ; it was broken and gave forth an odd, choking sound, uncanny in the stillness. After long waiting, a shabby individual appeared on the stairs who called himself the custode. He said that the director was very ill and in consequence the Gallery had been closed for many weeks ; but he offered to show us the way to the house of the director's brother. After taking

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us a few yards down the street, however, he changed his mind and left us. We never saw him again; but found our way somehow to a crazy little bric-à-brac shop where sat an old, very old man, working painfully with dim eyes at a bit of wood carving. It was some time before he could understand what we had come for; but at last, he said he would fetch the keys from his poor brother's keeping. "*È ancora,*" he added, "*più vecchio di me,*" and he hobbled off, telling us to go back to the Museo where he would join us.

I remember the air of a king with which, afterwards in parting, that threadbare ancient man refused a proffered coin; but then he was in truth the *Direttore's* brother.

Again we waited long; at last we heard the old man's feeble steps; he came and slowly, with great difficulty, began to climb the long flight of stairs to the Gallery door. Suddenly, as the clock struck twelve, we heard a low sound of hurrying feet, and in a moment scores of young students, of ages varying from about fifteen to twenty, came tearing in wild spirits down the stairs, from

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some abode of learning on the upper floors, released from work for that day. I was really alarmed for the old man, who was very nearly swept off his feet ; it was indeed Youth driving Age to the wall ; however, we reached the door of the gallery in safety, and the key turned with a fearful noise in the rusty lock. It was like going into some place of the dead. The ink had long been dry in the inkstand beside the visitor's book ; the lofty, neglected rooms were left in dust and darkness, and were deadly cold. Our old friend shivered and fastened his poor thin cloak closer round him ; then, drawing the double blinds, he let in the sunlight.

There are some interesting pictures in the collection—a portrait, for instance, of Charles I. in his youth, hitherto unnamed, but attributed to the Flemish painter Pourbus, which for who shall say how many years has hung there awaiting identification. There was no record as to how it had found its way to this remote place. Also we saw some quaint, stiff pictures by obscure, long-

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forgotten artists, whose descendants still survive in Faenza in lowly walks of life; I noticed the same names written on the windows of some poor little shops in the town. These painters in their way were humble seekers after the Divine: it is true they did not get very far, but the spirit was willing, and they have not entirely missed their reward. For, five centuries after they have departed their work survives them, though there are few now who heed it.

In a small room apart from these we came at length to the Giovannino, solitary save for the sad company of St. Jerome, dear to the mediæval artists; carved in wood, he stands clasping the Cross, beating his breast with a stone.

It seems a pity to leave the Giovannino behind locked doors in that forlorn place, while the old man who nominally has charge of him is sinking into the grave. There is not an art collection in the world but would welcome this masterpiece of the Florentine sculptor as a priceless possession. Yet the Municipio of Faenza cannot be blamed for

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keeping their treasure to themselves; and there, doubtless, it will always remain.

So living a thing it is, so tenderly childish, that the marble seems almost to yield to one's touch. The Giovannino is only a little boy, his chest and shoulders not yet fully formed, very small and thin under the coarse raiment; and the nape of his neck is soft, as it always is in children, beneath the clustering hair. There is no effort here, no striving after perfection; the artist found it ready to his hand in some beggar child, perhaps, that he chanced to see in the streets of Florence, just such another as those who beg for *soldi* there to-day; a child who lives for all time in this divine form of the little Messenger.

VERONA

VERONA

THERE was *festa* in the cathedral of Verona. The Bishop was preaching, a venerable and gorgeous figure in robes of scarlet and gold ; and gathered at his feet was a great assembly, consisting largely of peasants who had come streaming into the town during the early morning hours. They were perfectly still and attentive ; all listening as far as I could see, save one, a poor child in a rough blue jersey, who was fast asleep, a bunch of wild flowers fading in his little warm grasp. The Bishop had been preaching for an hour and a half when at last we left the cathedral, and he was then only just nearing the heart of his discourse. I sometimes fancy it is not ended yet.

Without, the sunlight was burning on the beautiful western door, on the great griffins which bear the columns of the porch, and

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the groups of Old Testament saints and Carolingian paladins on the façade, all intermingled with legend and strange device, the work of "one Niccolo" who lived nine hundred years ago. Some of the detail in this wealth of imagery hides now its meaning from us; it is indeed no light task to trace the pathway of ancient theology through the elaborate symbolism of the eleventh century. The griffin on the north side of the door, the "True Griffin" of Ruskin's famous chapter "of the True Ideal" in "Modern Painters" bears a wheel carved on his side. Ruskin thought to trace the connection in the artist's mind with the wheel that was beside the living creature in the vision of Ezekiel; he refers also to the griffin that Dante saw "in the mystical procession in the terrestrial paradise." In his revised proof, however, Ruskin crossed out his conjectures regarding Ezekiel and the Veronese griffin, as being unsatisfactory; and we are left in the dark as to what the wheel signifies, after all. The griffin itself "in its unity of lion and

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eagle" is an emblem of Christ and His two-fold nature, human and Divine; and we may take the wheel to be the symbol of eternity. The mighty griffins of the Duomo are among the grandest creations of sculpture in the world; but the greater part of the work on the façade is very rough and even grotesque. Yet all that Niccolo has done, both here and on the west front of San Zeno, are instinct with life and reality, and the faith of those far-off days. Above the mighty lions which guard the door of San Zeno, among saint and legend carved in the Verona stone, God's hand is seen, raised in blessing on His Church, and we read the words inscribed there, *Dextra Dei gentes benedicat sacra petentes*.

I recall a certain Easter Eve in San Zeno; the day when the new Fire and Incense, and the Font, are blessed for the year. The sunlight was flooding the quiet, desolate piazza around the great church, and defining into sharp shadows the quaint reliefs illustrating Old and New Testament history, that decorate the panels of the

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west door. Among them Salome is turning an eternal somersault in bronze before the delighted Herod. Within, the beautiful white roof which is carved and painted in a design of squares, shone in the shimmering light like mother-of-pearl. The broad central spaces of the nave were almost deserted ; only a sound of chanting came floating down from the choir. Suddenly a troop of children, like a flock of birds, came in chattering and laughing from the piazza ; they had bottles with them of many different shapes, and these they filled with holy water, standing on tiptoe around the great porphyry *coppa* of San Zeno. It was brought, says the legend, all the way from Rome to the Saint, in obedience to his word, by a wicked spirit from whom he had freed a royal maiden.¹

The disturbance breaking in on the quiet scene roused an old man at his prayers ; he rose, and going into the midst of the children he laid about them with his stick ; then a sacristan hastened down from the

¹ The legend is related at length in Madame Wiel's charming "Story of Verona."

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choir and drove them all out into the sunshine. They had got their holy water safely, however, and they took it away with them to bless their homes for the year.

San Zeno's glorious Mantegna is hung so far above the high altar that it is extremely difficult to see. A deplorable listlessness prevails in Verona as regards its art treasures, though recently there has been some improvement in this respect; but it would seem that the town has not yet recovered from the awful flood of September 1882, when many precious things were ruined. In the churches the chapels are choked with lumber, their furniture and hangings are falling to pieces, and the little Picture Gallery in the Museo Civico is a perfect wilderness. The masterpieces of the Veronese school, which in its day was second to none but the Venetian, are jumbled together there in dreary confusion. Yet though the dust of many years gathers on them, and faded though the colours are by the hard sunlight streaming through the uncurtained windows, we can see what they

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have been. Cavazzola's saints in glory look serenely down from heaven, Girolamo dai Libri's lovely Madonna, enthroned between St. Joseph and the archangel Raphael, lifts her hand in blessing: did those artists who created them care for praise or reward? High upon the wall over the entrance to a chapel in Saint Anastasia is a fresco which Mantegna painted there, we are told "with the utmost care." It is almost beyond the reach of human sight.

The friendly custodian, who greeted the infrequent visitor with great politeness, had been for twenty years at his post in that desolation. A better day, however, is dawning at last. There is one man in Verona who cares for her treasures, and is doing what he can to save them from further decay: this is Cavaliere Pietro Sgulmero, Vice-Bibliotecario of the Library, and Director of the Picture Gallery. Little by little, he is bringing order out of the confusion, rehanging and restoring some of the more important pictures, but money is lacking and no one takes much interest in his work. He

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is getting old, and it is very unlikely that he will live to finish it.

I had written the above before revisiting the Picture Gallery at Verona, a year or two later. An able new Director is now in charge of the collection, and the whole place looks happier and better cared for.

Sgulmero is dead, just as the fulfilment of his life's hope came in sight: the gentle, courteous old man, in an ancient black coat, I remember, that was turning green, with fires of love and enthusiasm shining in his eyes. On the wall of the staircase to the first floor is a marble medallion of him, and a grateful inscription records that he, first Director of the Gallery, gave to it his passionate strength and his life: *l'estremo sforzo appassionato e la vita*.

The Municipio have another work in hand which certainly does them credit. This is the excavation of the ancient theatre of the Romans, at the opposite end of the town from the great arena. A small part was first brought to light again in 1836 after

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having been buried for many centuries. With great labour-saving ingenuity, the theatre was constructed on the rocky side of a hill. The marble seats, tier above tier rising to an immense height, are perfect as of old ; and the system of canals can still be traced through which the waters of the Adige were brought to the theatre on the occasion of naval representations. Part of the stage has been disclosed, as also the beautiful outer halls and corridors. In order to lay these bare, whole streets that were built right over the site have been cleared away. High up on a ledge of rock, standing perilously, as it were, between earth and heaven, is the little church of SS. Siro and Libera. Tradition says that the first Mass in Verona was celebrated in this church, by the saints whose name it bears. On this spot, where Christianity and paganism met, it has fortunately been decided to preserve in safety the earliest landmark of Christian Verona.

SIDMOUTH

SIDMOUTH

AMIDST its beautiful surroundings of hills and moorland and sea, this little town has a charm of other days, like some old-fashioned trinket in a gorgeous setting. It would be well for all who can to see it while its beauty in great part is still untouched, for the mean civilisation of little jerry-built houses is slowly gaining ground. In some way of its own, Sidmouth wins a lasting place in one's heart. I can still hear from afar the shaggy Exmoor ponies, ridden by butcher-boys in bright blue smocks, clatter through the quiet streets, and the voice of the old town-crier announce the event of the day—"Messrs. Potbury will sell the remainder of Mr. Vince's furniture and effects this *afternün* at *tü* o'clock." It is a little disappointing that he has seldom anything more romantic to say, clad as he is—

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a venerable figure—in a beautiful purple cloak, with triple cape scarlet-edged, and three-cornered, gold-rimmed hat.

There is time for everything at Sidmouth. Even its little trickling stream, the Sid, is in no hurry to reach the sea, and no man knows if it ever actually gets there ; for the tide has gradually built a dam of pebbles and shingle right across its mouth, and beyond this barrier its course cannot be traced. Just above this point, a few minutes' climb up Salcombe Hill brings one to a flag-staff, which originally erected, so runs the inscription, by his fellow-townsmen to the memory of one Mr. Fish, was restored in commemoration of the Jubilee of 1887. The south-east winds, however, sweeping wild over the cliff, are fast reducing this national monument to its pristine condition, in which its honours were unshared by Queen Victoria.

There is not much of interest in Sidmouth Parish Church, which was rebuilt on an ancient site in the last century. The west window was put up by the late Queen in

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memory of her father, who died at Sidmouth. It is intended, we are quaintly informed by the guide-book, "to illustrate practical Christian Charity, as perfectly exemplified by our Lord, and so well practised by the Duke of Kent." We learn the date of the churchyard from an epitaph on the earliest tomb there. "Will. Nicholls," it runs, "for 50 years Builder in this town, who died April 14, 1837. . . and was the First Corpse Inter'd in this Ground." We trust that he laid the foundations of his mansion in heaven too, for we are further told that "His eternal Hopes, were Built on the Rock of Ages."

Of greater attraction than Sidmouth Church, though small and lowly in itself, is that of Salcombe Regis, the parish divided from Sidmouth by the Sid. Eastwards over Salcombe Hill a carriage-road leads to the hamlet lying in a long deep combe that runs down to the sea. The way winds through golden gorse beneath high wild hedgerows bright even in early spring with many colours. The church has a Norman tower

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with one or two fragments of beautiful ornament preserved in its outer wall. Within the doors, one Sunday morning, all was very quiet and peaceful, far from the great world. A little child sat in a corner of the chancel, a shaft of sunlight that pierced the crimson robe of a saint in the stained-glass window above her, shining red on her hair. Her fingers caught the light, and she amused herself through the greater part of the service moving them to and fro in the sunbeam.

The village of Branscombe, which straggles over the hollows of three combes a few miles inland, may be reached either from Salcombe valley or by the difficult cliff-path from Beer Head. This jutland was in old days intended to be used as a harbour of refuge for ships, for which purpose it offered great natural advantages; but Nature frustrated her own designs, for according to Leland, after “there was begon a faire pere for socour of shippelettes at this Brerewarde . . . there cam sech a tempest 3 yeres sins, as never in mynde of men had before beene

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seene in that shore, and tare the Pere in Peaces."

It is a wild, lonely region, round which shadowy legends have gathered. Giant sloths and reindeer, elks and kangaroos, says a local writer, are believed to have been its first inhabitants; then came men who fought wild cats and wolves there with knives of flint and wooden clubs; another race succeeded them who knew how to polish metal implements and were mighty hunters; these were found by the Romans and Phœnicians in possession of the land. A fifteenth-century chronicle records that "Sanctus Brandwellanus" who gave his name to the village, "a king's son and confessor, lyeth in the church of Branston" (thus the old spelling), but his burial-place has never been identified. The church is fast falling into ruin, and it is dangerous to enter the old high pews, for the crazy boards of the floor might let one through on to the bones of the nameless dead who sleep beneath, among whom, perhaps, the royal saint found rest. The three-decker desks and pulpit, almost

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the last of their kind in England, are surmounted by a torch emblem, which, it is thought, adorned the communion table in days when altar-lights were forbidden. As I saw it one still grey evening, the church was ghostly and sorrowful beyond all words. From a beautiful monument on the north wall of the chancel the spirit of a "godly gentlewoman" long dead, seemed still to point out the way through gathering darkness to the light. The inscription ran :—

"Man's life is but a shadowe.

When death did me assayle, to God then did I cry,
'Of Jacobes well to moyste my soul
That it might never dye."

Six miles north of Sidmouth, in the valley of the Otter, lies the little town of Ottery St. Mary. The famous church of the same name stands on a hill above the humble streets, crowning them gloriously. Founded in the reign of Alfred the Great, it was reconstructed by John de Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter, on the plan of his cathedral, in 1337, and raised as a collegiate church to a position of surpassing magnificence, which

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it retained till the fall of the monasteries nearly two centuries later. The Bishop appointed all details of its splendid ritual, and laid them down to be observed in the statutes, as he thought, for all time. These are hidden from most of us to-day in the old Latin, but some are given in the Rev. F. B. Dickinson's Lecture on the history of the church; and we read how the Bishop ordered the dress and reverent behaviour of his little choristers, and even specified the number—a wise provision this—"who might look and sing from one book." He gave the most minute care to his church, within and without; he built two chambers for "watching priests" to guard it day and night, and made it rich with treasures of gold and silver and the best art of his time. From the central boss of the vaulted roof, whereon his robed figure is carved, there hung, burning day and night, "a great lamp": emblem of his own light which so shone before men. The beautiful tombs raised by the Bishop to his brother and sister-in-law, Otho and Beatrix, are his own

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best memorial, perhaps, among all the treasures here!—so instinct are they with his reverent and loving spirit. Otho the warrior, clad in armour, lies with his head turned so as to rest on an image of Christ which once was placed in his sight.

In the north aisle the seats are carved, in the “folded-linen” pattern, with a border in imitation of hem-stitching, and open-work embroidery. The design itself is well known in mediæval decoration, but the pretty fantasy of the border is rare. On every bench-end the groundwork of the carving is stippled in a symmetrical pattern, done in days when no artist worked hastily or without love. At intervals on the walls of the church both without and within, “consecration crosses”—medallions of an angel with a cross on his breast—mark the spots which once were touched with holy oil. In the Lady Chapel is a gilded lectern, the Bishop’s gift, carved with a seagull. Evidently the artist had some trouble in shaping its claws, for the globe bearing the donor’s arms, on which they rest, is too small for

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them. So he has bent the bird's strong legs slightly inward in order to give the claws sufficient purchase, and has indicated their difficult grip by the indented marks they have made on the surface of the globe.

Time failed us, the day we saw Bishop Grandisson's church, for studying all its beauties in detail; the wonderful astronomical clock made by a monk of the college, which with one little rest of thirty years, has been going ever since 1340; the stone work and lead and timber work, the lovely gallery built for the singing men in the Lady Chapel. We passed out under the glorious west front. Much of its splendour has perished, but one can still find traces of what it has been: Christ enthroned in glory, showing His wounded side; and with Him playing angels and a great company of saints.

In the churchyard rest the brethren of the old Foundation. At the head of a nameless grave a purple mezereon in full flower raised its beautiful crown fearlessly in the cold March wind—bravest harbinger of spring, at

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a time when the shy primroses and violets are only just beginning to star the hedgerows.

Life is profoundly peaceful in this little corner of South Devon. Sidmouth society, or at least that portion of it which takes its airing on the miniature esplanade, goes home to tea, with unbroken regularity it seems, every day at five. Coming home from some excursion at that hour, I have found the beach almost deserted save for a few fishermen and the sea-gulls with their fretful cry, and beyond, on either hand, the rose-red rocks keeping watch.

SCENES IN SOUTH CORNWALL

I

SCENES IN SOUTH CORNWALL

I

NEARLY three hundred miles from London the little town of Fowey, or Foye, in South Cornwall, lies above its beautiful harbour, "the haven under the hill" of "In Memoriam." One or two other places claim the honour of the poet's thought; but we prefer to give it to Fowey.

For many a century its old grey houses "lying along the shore, and hangging," says Leland, "on the side of a great flatty rokkid Hille," have looked down on the changing scenes among the fisher folk, and on the ruins of the strong twin towers built by Edward IV. for the defence of the haven, where fragments can still be traced of the great chain that once connected them from shore to shore. Now and again they see the little tug-boat taking some beautiful ship

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out to sea, away from the shelter of the harbour—like a quiet, dowdy parent bringing a brilliant daughter out into the great world.

In old chronicles we read of many a deed “of warre and piracie” that made Fowey’s history six centuries ago, till from a “smaul Fischar Toun” it rose to wealth and glory under Edward III., and her powerful merchants and the “Fowey gallants” her seamen, grew reckless and puffed up with pride. Carew in his “Survey of Cornwall” tells how they offered deliberate insult to Winchelsea and Rye, and brought low these powerful seaports in battle; how at one time they owned sixty “tall ships” and offered forty-seven of them to the service of Edward III. for the siege of Calais; and how at last for their “prankes and insolent disobedience” they fell, never quite to recover, under the wrath of King Edward IV. It is a stirring story, and we will let Mr. Carew tell some of it in his own words, transcribed just as they stand, from “this mine ill-husbanded Survey” as he humbly

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calls it in the noble dedication of his work to his friend Sir Walter Raleigh.

“During the warlike reignes of our two valiant Edwards, the first and third,” he writes, “the Foyens addicted themselves to backe their Prince’s quarrell, by coping with the enemy at sea, and made returne of many prizes; which purchases hauing aduanced them to a good estate of wealth, the same was (when the quieter conditioned times gaue means) heedfully and diligently employed, and bettered, by the more ciuill trade of merchandise . . . Heeron, a full purse begetting a stout stomack, our Foyens tooke heart at grasse [of grace?] and chauncing about that time . . . to sayle neere Rye and Winchelsea, they stifly refused to vaile their bonets at the summons of those tounes;¹ which contempt (by the better enabled Seafarers reckoned intolerable) caused the

¹ “To ‘vaile the bonet’ was the signal of greeting or respect between ships at sea. The ‘bonet’ was an additional piece of canvas laced to the top of a sail to catch more wind.”—*Johnson’s Dictionary*.

“Then let them vaile a bonet of their proud sayle.”

—*Skelton*.

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Ripiers to make out might and mayne against them; howbeit, with a more hardy onset, then happy issue; for the Foy men gave them so rough entertaynment at their welcome, that they were glad to forsake patch [quit the scene] without bidding farewell. . . .” Thereafter the men of Foye bore the arms and appropriated part of the privileges enjoyed by the Cinque Ports. “Moreover, the prowesse of one Nicholas, sonne to a widdow, near Foy, is deskanted upon, in an old three mans songs, namely, how he fought brauely at sea, with John Dory (a Genowey, as I coniecture) . . . tooke, and slew him, in reuenge of the great rauine, and crueltie, which he had fore committed upon the English men’s goods and bodies. Yet their so often good succeſſe sometimes tasted the sawce of crosser speeding,” and the old writer relates further how for a churlish refusal to “joyne companie” with an English fleet under Sir Hugh Calvely and Sir Thomas Percy, some bargemen of Foye harbour were overtaken with swift disaster.

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“No sooner was the English fleete past out of sight, but that a Flemish man of warre lighted upon them, and (after a long and strong resistance) . . . tooke the Barge, sunk it, and slaughtered all the saylers, one onely boy excepted.” This misfortune did but nerve the Foyens to fresh deeds of lawlessness, which brought about their final fall, wrought by a stratagem on the part of the King. “Not long after, our Foy gallants, vnable to beare a low sayle, in their fresh gale of fortune, began to skum the seas, with their often piracies, as also to violate their dutie at land, by insolent disobedience to the Prince’s officers, cutting off (amongst other pranckes) a Pursiuant’s eares: whereat King *Edward* the fourth conceiued such indignation, as hee sent commissioners vnto Lostwithiel (a toune thereby) who, vnder pretence of vsing their seruice, in sea affaires, trained thither the greatest number of the Burgesses; and no sooner come, then laid hold on, and in hold, their goods were confiscated . . . the chaine of their hauen removed to Dartmouth, and their wonted

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iolity transformed into a sudden misery ; from which they striued a long time, in vaine, to releue themselves : but now of late yeres doe more and more aspire to a great amendment of their former defects, though not to an equall height of their first abundance.”

Here, suffering not undeserved adversity, we must leave these warrior spirits of Foye ; but we would recall from Leland one more incident, of a siege of the town by the French in the reign of Henry VI., because it sheds glory on a woman.

Next to its splendid church, the chief pride of Fowey is Place House, famous for its porphyry hall and beautiful Elizabethan architecture, the ancient home of the Treffrys. The house was defended by the wife of the second Thomas Treffry, who “with her men repellid the French out of her House in her *Housebandes* absence.” Thereafter Thomas Treffry raised a mighty memorial to his wife’s bravery, and “buildid a right faire and stronge embateled Towr in his House, and embateling al the waulles of the House in a

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maner made it a Castelle; and on to this Day it is the glorie of the Toun Building in Foweye."

Such was Fowey's story in the old days. Now, peace reigns over its deep blue waters and wild broken shores, and narrow streets where what little traffic there is wakens the sleeping echoes. St. Finbarrus' church stands in a tiny open space magnificently named Trafalgar Square. The present building dates from 1336, when St. Nicholas was set over the head of its original patron as its name-saint—but the Cornishmen of Fowey would have none of him, and gave their allegiance back to their "St. Barry." The tower, highest but one in Cornwall, is very beautiful, with bands of delicate ornament of the fifteenth century.

Fowey trades to this day, as her great merchants did of old, in china clay with foreign countries; and this brings ships here from all parts of the world. We saw a splendid white Norwegian in the harbour one day: she was to sail that night for the West Indies. Just as day was breaking was heard the tug-boat's siren call, her red light

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shining in the shadows as she led the stranger away. Sometimes a foreign sailor finds his way to the little cottage hospital: a Danish lad, fallen from a masthead, died there; he could not understand a word of English, and must have longed to see his native land once more.

Of the many little fishing villages near Fowey, the most beautiful is Polperro, some miles east of the town, and within a few hours' drive from the opposite side of the harbour. We crossed in the ferry-raft one day, which took our carriage and two horses bodily over. As the horses went plunging down the steep incline over great stones to the water, the scene recalled the old posting days. "We have a warm time now and again with a young horse," the driver said. Little Polperro, lying in its splendid rocky bay on that shining morning, how beautiful it was!—the boats lying idle close to shore, "for the fishermen were out of them, and were mending their nets."

The seafaring men of Cornwall might well be descendants of those of Galilee—for

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though its origin cannot now be clearly traced, the Eastern strain in them shows itself plainly in their bold features and glowing colour. They are thrifty, sober and prosperous, and seem to want for nothing.

One ancient mariner, who was spending life's evening in his little boat in Fowey waters, took us during many hours, now beyond the harbour out to sea, and again into lonely creeks and inlets nearer home, where the wooded banks were beautiful with gorse and wild flowers and the little round-leaved stonecrop clings to every bit of wall. The walls in these parts are built roughly of layers of stone, some placed up on end, some laid horizontally; and the stonecrop always prefers the former arrangement, its roots spreading more easily down the chinks; and so the surface of the walls has an effect like patchwork, green and grey. The tall "snowdrop tree" flourishes by the water-side, its pure white blossoms resembling those of its little sorrowful namesake.

Our old friend was learned in legends and stories of the sea. The Cornishmen have

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among their countless superstitions a strong belief in fairies ; their world is peopled with “piskies,” who are kind, helpful little beings, though mischievous when the fancy takes them ; “spriggans,” evil sprites whose delight is to steal poor people’s babies from their cots and put wicked imps in their stead ; and “knockers,” the souls of the Jews who crucified our Saviour. These now toil for ever in the tin-mines, and are forced at Christmas-time to sing carols in His praise. They are said to haunt the richest mines, and with a sound of knocking and ringing, they guide a lucky miner to find good ore. There are shadowy stories of giants also, who once lived in Cornwall, and used in playful mood to throw rocks at each other. Jack the Giant Killer was the “valiant Cornishman” who usefully employed his leisure time in building the Giant’s Hedge, a great earthwork not far from Fowey, since immortalised in poetry :

“Jack, the Giant, had nothing to do,
So he built a hedge from Lerrin to Looe.”

John of Gaunt (I have gleaned these
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legends from Miss Courtney's work on Cornish Folklore) is believed, with sublime disregard of history, to have been the last of these giants, and to sleep under a great cairn near Redruth; his mighty arm is stretched out from it, turned to stone—as it were an eternal appeal against the oblivion of time. So also to the Cornish sailors the sea speaks with a thousand voices of the dead: comrades whose souls live on in the sea-birds, or who call to them from phantom ships, guiding them past dangers into safety. The spirit of a poor mother for ever seeking her lost child haunts the coast of St. Ives; sailors look for her lantern-light to warn them of coming storms; and from the tomb of a sea-captain near Land's End the sound of bells is sometimes heard, twelve separate knells, in remembrance of the midnight hour when he sank with his ship, after all his men were saved.

Every little church in Cornwall has its own special saint and store of legends. Up the Fowey river, an hour's row brings one

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to the landing-stage for St. Sampson's, which is reached after a steep climb of half a mile, past decrepit old cottages covered with roses—true Christmas roses these, for they bloom in mid-winter as in June. On the site of the present church stood once the hermitage of St. Sampson, one of the earliest Celtic saints, canonised a thousand years ago. Some writers spell his name without the *p*; it is a matter much disputed by learned antiquaries. He was a wandering missionary saint, who came originally from Ireland, and ended his days as Bishop of Dol in Brittany. English Litanies dating before the tenth century record him among the confessors.

This church of St. Sampson is interesting for the beautiful Celtic knot-work on the bosses of the roof, and the deep-carved fern-pattern on bench-ends and lectern. In some very old glass of the east window is the figure of St. Anthony the Hermit, gentlest of saints, patron of wild and savage animals. In Spain this saint is held in special reverence,

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and it is thought that the window in this remote Cornish church was put up by some Spanish merchant who came trading to English shores before the Reformation.

More lonely still than St. Sampson's is Lanteglos Church, which has a splendid position high above a deep wooded gorge, and is reached by way of a peaceful little backwater of the sea. Up to 1901 this was one of the few ancient churches in England left untouched. In the churchyard is an old lantern-cross, the head carved with figures, roughly treated by time and dimly distinguished now, of Mother and Child; and within the church was an old musicians' gallery now taken down by the restorers, whence in former days were heard flageolet and serpent and bass-viol.

Yet with all their old-time memories, these southern shores of Cornwall seem to speak to the stranger to-day of life, not death; and of joy, not sorrow. The sight of the children there often put me in mind

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of those in the old carol whom Mary chose
as playmates for the Infant Saviour :—

“Go the wayst out, Child Jesus,
Go the wayst out to play;
Down by God’s Holy Well
I see three pretty children
As ever tongue can tell.”

This carol “for its sweet simplicity is
still a favourite in the west.”

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II

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II

THE year is almost ended. In memory's picture-book another page will soon be finished ; and at home in the fast-closing afternoons I sit turning over the leaves.

I fancy that with one or two companions I am following again the footpath that leads from Mullion Harbour to Gunwalloe Church, six miles from the Lizard in South Cornwall. Land and sea are veiled in driving grey mist and rain. We clamber down over slippery rocks to the beach, where the little church stands under the hills, safeguarded from the sea by a massive stone wall fringed with bright green tamarisk and mesembryanthemum. On the shore a great white gannet lies dead, its pinions torn and broken, and on the face of the rock above, a tablet fixed there tells the story of two friends who were

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drowned by the receding tide. It is a wild, lonely spot, the grave of many a sailor, fit dwelling-place for the remote hermit-saint—his very name sounds like a lament of the sea—Winwaloe, who lived here fourteen hundred years ago. His light burns low now in the shadows of those far-off days. We gather from ancient records, half-legendary and confused, that he was born of the Royal lineage of Wales and was dedicated to God's service from childhood, and that he became Superior over eleven monks on a desert island off the shores of Brittany. The dangers of that wild region driving him to seek other refuge with his little flock, "a path was supernaturally opened for them through the water, along which they walked, hand in hand, chanting a song of praise." On another occasion, being anxious to visit St. Patrick in Ireland, he was about to cross the seas when the saint miraculously appeared, spoke with him and blessed him: and so he was spared the perils of the journey. Winwaloe became afterwards Abbot of the great monastery of

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Landaviniec, "the cradle of Christianity" in ancient Armorica. Late in life he came back to England and spent most of his old age a hermit at Gunwalloe, so absorbed in the things of heaven, and "his prayer being so fervent, that he seemed to forget that he lived in a mortal body." Relics of St. Winwaloe, greatly venerated, are preserved in various parts of France; some are at Montreuil, in Picardy.

Gunwalloe Church is believed to have been built in the thirteenth century by two sisters as a thankoffering for their preservation from shipwreck. They could not agree upon the exact site, and therefore decided to build the tower in one place and the church in another, 14 feet apart. So says the legend; but it must be taken for what it is worth, other instances of separate church towers being not unknown. Within Gunwalloe Church little of beauty or interest is left. There remain yet the old barrel roof with its carved beams, the delicate frieze that borders the wall of the nave, and the beautifully moulded abacus of the piers.

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Evidently the church once possessed a rood-screen, painted by some unskilful though reverent artist with figures of the Apostles. The panels are divided asunder and dispersed about the nave; on those that now form part of the north door can be dimly descried St. Matthew with his axe, St. John with chalice and serpent, St James the Great with staff and scrip.

As we went home to Mullion the evening sky promised a good day to come, the westerly storms of the past three weeks having spent their fury at last; and the following morning we stood in the harbour in the sunshine, watching the pilchard boats putting out to sea. The fishing season was nearing its height, and there was promise of a record catch; the shoals had been sighted at dawn in the bay, staining the water in great patches of dusky red. Every spring-time these fish rise in mighty hosts from unknown depths of the sea somewhere west of Scilly, and begin their wanderings, coming close inland around the Cornish coast and Mount's Bay, beset in their course by hungry

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hordes of fish and birds of prey. As they near the shores, look-out men stationed on the cliffs give the well-known call of "Héva! Héva!"—Celtic for "Found!"—and from far and near the people come rushing to the scene. We reached the harbour just as a great black boat was sent thundering down over logs laid across her path to the sea. The impetus was insufficient, and she stuck in the sand. The people crowded together to push her, fifty of them setting their backs into her sides, directed by a strange rhythmic chant that was taken up alternately by two of the men; an old coastguard interpreted the words for me: "All 'ands 'eave 'er along!" On either side of the harbour appeared a dozen men walking in procession, each little company bearing on their shoulders one of the great seine nets. It was pretty to see them; they made a moving pattern of bright colours in the sunlight. Just at that moment the effort to move the boat finally failed; she had to be hauled up on shore by means of a capstan and launched afresh, this time with success.

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All was now ready, and the seines, four or five in all, with three boats to each, were taken out to sea. The nets are a marvel in themselves; laid at their full length they measure a quarter of a mile, and are twelve fathoms deep. They are "shot" with wonderful skill and quickness into the sea so as to encircle the shoals of pilchards, and drawn gradually closer and closer in. The master of the net in a little boat stations himself at its opening, to see that none of the fish escape. And then through long hours they watch. The people, motionless on the cliffs, strain their eyes watching too all day till nightfall, the nets tracing strange shapes and figures on the face of the water, while flocks of greedy sea-gulls wheel and flutter round. When the nets are drawn tight enough and the fish are all raised to the surface of the water, comes at last the time for "tucking" or shipping them. It was about five o'clock when a little fleet of fishing-boats came in sight from the further shores of Mount's Bay—these were they which take the pilchards to be salted at St.

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Ives and Penzance, whence the greater part are exported to Italy and Spain. If the boats arrive late from other fisheries at Gunwalloe and Cadgwith the tucking has to be begun by moonlight, or failing that, the pilchards are left imprisoned where they are till the following day. When there is a large haul the tucking may extend over several days, and it is always a lovely sight. From our height on the cliffs the fishermen seemed to be playing with foam as they dipped their baskets over the boat-sides into the water. Pilchards are pretty little fish, with silver bodies and peacock-blue backs. Through the coastguard's telescope we could see the men standing knee-deep in them as they poured them in twinkling, sparkling streams into the boat:—

“ ‘There's heaps o' pilchurs now,' cries Tom,
 ‘There's a passel o' pilchurs now;
There's hunderds o' hos-geads in William's net,
 And tummals under our bow.’

“ ‘Well done! well done! my fishers bold!’
 The parson then did say;
“Tis well you see, both for you and me,
 To labour and to pray.’ ”

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The sun that evening lighted up all the western sky—he laid a broad track of fire right across the quiet sea to the rocks at our feet; it reached the little groups of boats with their red sails and flooded them with light as though he blessed them. And so in truth he did, for they sailed with eighteen million pilchards over Mount's Bay to St. Ives.

I turned at last from the dazzling sight, to go up the quiet road that leads to the village.

At my feet far below lay the little Cove, by some Phœnician sailors first named Mullyon, which means "smooth"; for only here, where all the coast was perilous, could some slight shelter be found. The inlet, with its new granite harbour, is transformed since the days sixty years ago when it contained only "a mill (which is worked by a stream running down through the valley), some fish cellars and a few humble cottages, on which last, owing to the height of the rising ground behind them, the sun, in the winter months, never shines. In one of these lives an old man who has been blind

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for many years, and who, though at all times contented and amiable, is glad indeed when the month of March is come, for he finds his solitary walk up and down the road in front of his cottage more cheerful when he feels the blessed sun shining on his sightless eyes." So wrote the Rev. C. A. Johns, the botanist, in his little book 'A Week at the Lizard,' in 1848. It is beside me as I gather up these recollections, in the original covers, worn and stained, its pages illustrated with lovely old woodcuts.

The seine boats when not in use are still, as he describes them, hauled up on shore beyond the reach of the surf; and the famous natural cavern that pierces the grand rocks of serpentine overlooking the harbour is unchanged. It is a wonderful, fearsome place, hard to struggle through over the treacherous floor laid with slippery wrack, and between still black pools that the sunlight never reaches, on to the quiet golden sands beyond. These remain : a few cottages still nestle in a cleft of the heather hills ; but the blind man's eyes are opened now,

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we hope, in heaven. Far and wide stretches the moor, the pathway over it where it nears the cliffs being marked out with white stones to guide wanderers by night. The plain is bright with many kinds of heather, conspicuous among them the Goonhilly Heath which grows abundantly all over the Lizard country; these border the roadside for miles in a broad ribbon of soft colours. The few trees and shrubs that struggle here against the south-west wind become rusty and discoloured early in the summer—so that they look like an old-fashioned drawing by one of those early water-colour artists who always saw the trees brown. A mile or two westward the mysterious Marconi towers lift their skeleton forms high into the sky.

The whole district of the Lizard holds lurid memories of wrecking, the awful, cold-blooded crime of enticing ships to their death by false signals.¹ Happily, this belongs

¹ This evil trickery was not confined to the Cornish coasts. Mrs. Rodolph Stawell in her book "Motor Tours in Wales and the Border Counties" tells a similar story with its tragic sequel: "In Tenby Church lies the dust of a certain Walter . . . of the house of Vaughan . . . who

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now to very far off days ; but in its modified form, the plundering of wrecks, and appropriation of dead men's property, it was extensively practised among dwellers by the Cornish sea a century ago. "If a Cornishman prayed at all, he prayed for a good wreck." Those were the grand days of smuggling too, before the teaching of the Wesleys, says a historian of Mullion, "had induced west country folk, as a certain witty cleric has observed, to 'alter' their sins"; and when the Preventive Service against contraband trading boasted but a handful of men for twelve miles of those savage shores. Times are changed now. On the high road a few miles from Lizard Point we

figures darkly in one of those moral tales—one might almost call them tracts—of which one occasionally hears in actual life. In Walter's day, which was also the day of Queen Mary, the shores of Dunraven" (his castle) "twinkled with treacherous lights, which lured unwary ships to the shore, causing their complete destruction and the great enrichment of the lord of the manor. At last, after years of this villainy, he was waiting one night for the fruits of his labours, waiting while the doomed ship was shaken to pieces and the bodies of her crew were one by one washed ashore. The last body that came was that of his own sailor-son."

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met a venerable, tranquil old man, of the prosperous farmer type, whose father had been "king of the smugglers" in his day, and last of his race.

Mullion Village is about a mile from the coast. I remember how quiet it was that day, when the excitement of the pilchard fishing had drawn almost every soul to the shore. The houses seemed all deserted and empty; even the weather gauge that is let into the wall by the roadside had been forgotten, for its indicator still recorded cloud and sunshine of the previous day. Down the tidy, bare little street and an ivy-bordered lane, and through the lych-gate, I approached the church. It was built in the fifteenth century on the site of an older church; and outside it is very simple and homely, as though some childlike soul had fashioned it. The tower, the haunt of hundreds of birds, is half granite, half green and grey serpentine; the little churchyard is the resting-place of many a storm-tost mariner; and its ancient cross stands in the usual position before the porch. In the

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wall over the west window is a Crucifixion rudely carved, with the Virgin and "the beloved disciple" standing beneath.

Within the church is one supreme treasure—the carved work on the benches. They are of oak, almost blackened by time, and the seats when I saw them were covered with strips of blue carpet, probably chosen merely by chance, which made a lovely note of colour there. It is believed that the timber for these benches was brought from an ancient forest near Kynance Cove at the Lizard, which sheltered a hermit saint ten centuries ago. Here, deeply carved and for the most part unharmed by the years, is a wonderful series of emblems of the Passion, and figures of many of those who crucified Our Lord, and mocked and scourged Him—with Herod, and Pilate, and Judas. In some medallions on the bench-ends the artists have given rein to their contempt of the priests of their own day, and carved lively caricatures of the best hated among them. Two interesting figures form a panel of the reading desk; one of these is usually

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taken to represent Saint Clare ; she holds a monstrance, and wears an Elizabethan dress with an enormous ruff that reaches her waist. Thomas Flavel, who was Vicar of Mullion in the seventeenth century, and is buried in the chancel, "attained great celebrity in the questionable art of laying ghosts," for which service, attended by many absurd ceremonies and the chastisement of the unseen spirits with a horsewhip, he demanded, we are told, the extortionate fee of five guineas. After his death, his own ghost was in its turn chased from the earth by a rival magician, on a spot that long after was still shown on the moors.

As I passed out of the church, an old woman met me and we stayed talking. She was widow of the chief craftsman of the place, artist and worker in marbles : and I had visited the humble workshop which still bears his name. The Cornish carvers have it would seem a limited imagination as to design, for they repeat everywhere the same dolphins and fishes and tridents, and a few vases of simple, graceful shape ; but they

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know how to polish the serpentine till its beautiful colours shine like gems, dark green, almost black, with crimson stains, bronze and grey and crystal. The old woman went prattling on, glad to find a friend; she had had but little talk with the neighbours that day. "It is so quiet at home in the long evenings," she said; "in the day time those beautiful things my husband made seem to keep me company." His name is signed on many a gravestone at Mullion and Cury and Gunwalloe; but when he was dying he told her he would have no memorial over his own grave: only the grass growing.

I left her and turned to go back to the inn. Just at that moment I heard the faint swift music of a myriad wings as a great flock of starlings flew over the church tower; and the sun, low in the west, touched the dim figures on the old wall with fiery light.

